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THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN READER AND TEXT

by

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MARGARET R. HUNSBERGER

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DEDICATION

To GIH and MMH
with gratitude for
childhood security
adult friendship and
a life-time of love

ABSTRACT

What is the experience of reading? What is it like to be a reader? This concern with the essential nature of the experience of reading is the focus of the study.

Understanding the lived experience is a phenomenological question, and the study attempts to describe as deeply and insightfully as possible what an able reader experiences in the encounter with text. Sources of data include the observation and personal anecdotes shared by enthusiastic adult readers, novels or poems which refer to reading, as well as professional literature (in the areas of reading theory, hermeneutics, literary criticism and phenomenology).

This is a curriculum study, even a practical curriculum study, in the sense that teachers of reading, if they are to guide children toward a rich and satisfying experience with text, must first themselves be readers and understand what it is like to read, what happens in the encounter between reader and text, and therefore what they wish children to come to experience.

The first chapter describes the method used. Reading always involves intentionality; it necessitates both a reader and a text. Chapter II discusses reading as a dialogue between reader and text, a dialogue in which vulnerability and response are needed if disclosure and understanding are to occur. When the text leaves space for the reader to enter, or when readers talk over a text, a circle of understanding can form, a circle which can lead to the richest interpretation within an interpretive community. This further exploration of intentionality comprises Chapter III. Chapter IV considers re-reading.

How is the dialogue with a text different the second time it occurs? Why do we return to a familiar text?

A major factor in reading is time and the way in which we experience its flow, especially the familiar experience of contrast between clock time and the inner sense of how much, or how little, time has passed during absorption in a text. Temporality is a fundamental phenomenological theme and time in reading is the concern of Chapter V. Every text has a body, a structure, of its own, with stories being a very favourite form. The corporeality of stories and other structures is the theme of Chapter VI. Chapters VII and VIII explore the new world created by the encounter with text; not only the sense of reality evoked during reading, but the incorporation of stories, language and ideas into our lives. In the imagination and spirit, the inner being where we are most truly at home, the effect of the encounter with text can be profound, influencing how we think, feel, and act. This experience of reading can be significant and lasting.

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Chapter I

UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCE OF READING

During the years when Russell and Whitehead were working together, so the story goes, Whitehead was fascinated to realize that Russell approached every issue in a very different way than he himself did. Finally he commented to Russell, "You know, there are two kinds of people in the world: the simple-minded and the muddle-headed. You, Bertie, are simple-minded; I am muddleheaded" (Barrett, 1967, p. 17). Beneath the humour, the remark contains considerable insight, delineating those who see smaller ideas clearly while ignoring the larger complexity from those who see the complexity but are not as precise about the specifics. "The 'simple-minded' fasten upon the clear fragments of fact that lie in the foreground to the neglect of the complex background of reality against which those facts emerge. The 'muddle-headed', on the other hand, are so engrossed in this complexity of background that enters into every atom of fact that clarity of expression emerges dimly if at all" (Barrett, p. 18). These two approaches represent two quite different ways of knowing. In traditional research terms, the "simple-minded" way is based on the approach to knowledge called explanation and "muddle-headed" is based on that approach known as understanding. Explanation and understanding are not only different ways of knowing but also lead to different views of what counts as knowledge.

The majority of research in the field of reading has been done by the methods appropriate to explanation; by contrast the study which follows grew out of an interest in attempting to apply the insights of understanding to the experience of reading. Research in reading has been prolific, but it has for the most part been done using an empirical methodology and has concerned itself with product and process aspects of reading, with techniques and strategies readers use, and with meticulous analysis of various aspects of the reading act. More recently, some ethnographic studies have been done, usually again focusing on the reading process. Also the majority of reading research has been concerned with beginning reading and the gradual development of reading skill as children grow and learn; thus, much of the research has concentrated on the elementary and secondary school level. While there is a limited amount of work on more mature reading, studies have not taken the stance of describing the lived experience of a proficient reader, using the reader's perspective and experience as the base. The usual procedure is to examine the process as some kind of technique or strategy, as though it were independent of a person—a method that is certainly impersonal and largely decontextualized. Methods rooted in understanding have been used very sparsely to date in reading research and, while the successes and limitations of explanation are well-known and frequently discussed, the promise and potential of understanding remain to be explored. This represents a beginning.

My own interest in understanding the experience of reading was born largely of two factors, one positive and one negative: a personal life-long fascination with reading and the joys of books, and a growing dissatisfaction with the limited focus of exploration in empirical reading research. That is, while reading studies gave much useful data, they never seemed to address such questions as: what is it that the reader experiences? why is this experience so beloved and sought after by some individuals and so despised and avoided by others? what difference does it make which text the reader reads? what is the effect of a particular text upon the imagination and life-world of the reader? In short, in reading research, the heart seemed to be missing. I read reports of theories developed, models built, instructional strategies devised, statistical analyses carried out, and it was all useful knowledge, some of it even important knowledge, but it told me nothing about why I was inevitably drawn again to text, either for a new and anticipated experience or a return for another encounter with a familiar and appreciated text. Something vital seemed missing.

There was also for me a growing unease with the confidence typically displayed in research methodology. It began to seem very like blind confidence, as though nothing could be known in education until shown by research and logical application of the empirical method guaranteed educational truth.

It seemed that more attention should be given to the wider perspective offered by considering the contributions of various research methodologies and the differing kinds of insights each has to offer. The need for balance and for inclusion of the more poetic thought in research is described perceptively by the eminent medical researcher, Lewis Thomas:

> We must rely on our scientists to help us find the way through the near distance, but for the longer stretch of the future we are dependent on the poets. We should learn to question them more closely, and listen more carefully. A poet, is after all, a sort of scientist, but engaged in a qualitative science in which nothing is measurable. He lives with data that cannot be numbered, and his experiments can be done only once. The information in a poem is, by definition, not reproducible. His pilot runs involve a recognition of things that pop into his head. The skill consists in his capacity to decide quickly which things to retain, which to eject. He becomes an equivalent of scientist, in the act of examining and sorting the things popping in, finding the marks of remote similarity, points of distant relationship, tiny irregularities that indicate that this one is really the same as that one over there only more important. Gauging the fit, he can meticulously place pieces of the universe together, in geometric configurations that are as beautiful and balanced as crystals. Musicians and painters listen, and copy down what they hear. (1979, pp. 87-88)

Attention to more than one way of knowing and more than one form of knowledge would seem to be of considerable benefit to the field of reading.

In addition to its basis in reading, the study is rooted in aspects of hermeneutics, literary criticism and phenomenology. Hermeneutics involves the making of interpretations, especially text interpretation. Arising in theology where it has been a major consideration, it has also been of interest in philosophy and literary criticism. But in literary criticism the focus has frequently been on text structure and style. The role of the reader in making an interpretation seems to have received less attention. Underlying this study is a concern with the encounter between reader and text, with what happens when the two meet and with the making of a text interpretation.

Phenomenology arose in European scholarship as one orientation within the social sciences. Its resources are drawn heavily from philosophical thought, especially existentialism, rather than from the behavioral sciences which it has reacted against. While there is then considerable overlap in phenomenology of philosophy and social science study, in the work of such scholars as Heidegger for example, the thrust of phenomenology has been as a thoughtful approach to social science. It is with phenomenology as a method applicable within education that we are here concerned. "'Phenomenology' is a name which is mainly used to designate a movement in the social and human sciences, which has as its primary objective the direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously (pre-theoretically) experienced" (Van Manen, 1979, p. 49). Causal explanation and unconsidered preconceptions are to be avoided. The concern is always with the discovery and disclosure of the deepest meanings of shared human experience.

In this sense phenomenology has profound implications for pedagogy and curriculum, for it seeks to allow teachers to understand and share their students' life-world, so that teacher and students can discover and experience the world together. "Phenomenological knowledge is 'practical' in the sense that it may contribute to a teacher's pedagogic orientation: the wisdom to act with self-inspired pedagogic sense in educational situations" (Van Manen, 1979, p. 26). This is perhaps the very most practical knowledge a teacher can have: the ability and wisdom to make sound educational judgments and to be guided in teaching by an understanding of the learner and the learning. This is not the sort of practical information that provides lists of "how-tos," but the sort that gives teachers a base for structuring learning experiences in light of their understanding of both child and phenomenon. Pedagogic wisdom informs practice. Thus, a study such as this will not give teachers techniques for teaching word recognition, but hopefully it will give insight into what the experience of reading is, what it is that we readers find so stimulating and satisfying, and what we teachers are seeking to have our students participate in and share. By considering first what we ourselves experience as mature readers, secondly what children as novices in reading are experiencing, and thirdly how their experience of reading can be made richer, teachers can be practical reading teachers. Phenomenology is a basic way to pedagogy.

From the convergence of these diverse strands arises the central question: what is this experience of reading? what is it like to be a reader? That is the concern which underlies the whole study.

And it immediately leads to a consideration of how, by what method, such a question is to be explored. Although I shall describe what I did, it must be noted that this is not a necessary, nor fixed process. Phenomenological questions must be pursued, not through a series of prescribed steps, but by the best ways the researcher can devise; that is, the most appropriate way for the particular question and researcher.

The process involved doing as much reading as possible, talking with avid readers and writing and rewriting. These aspects were concurrent, not consecutive. The beginning point was the usual one of reading as widely as possible in the professional literature; but this was not a first step, rather an activity that was on-going throughout the study. Simultaneously, I was thinking of areas that seemed to need further elucidation, or questions I wondered about and wanted to discuss. Discussions led to further questions and more reading which led to more questions and further discussions. . . . Also, in such a study, thoughtful and disciplined reflection on one's personal experience is very helpful—not to mention a source of further questions and doubts. Clear and cogent thinking is most useful! Since all of these aspects of exploration were concurrent, they can be described but they cannot be neatly laid out in a step-by-step fashion.

It is a common experience that when one is absorbed in a topic, references to it pop up readily, sometimes in unexpected places. So, in addition to the professional reading already mentioned, the reading done for this study included novels, poems and other creative literature. Frequently when I was reading a novel, essay or poem for other purposes such as enjoyment, a reference to reading appeared, sometimes as a character's action, sometimes as a metaphor or allusion. But always the author was providing, even if indirectly, a description of some aspect of the experience of reading. Authors, obviously, are literate so perhaps it is not surprising that writing should be full of references to reading. But I had not realized how frequently they occur until I was set to notice them.

Somewhat similarly, references to reading crop up in conversation, particularly in a university setting. But I specifically asked various readers if they would sit and talk freely with me about their experiences of reading. Each person was in some way university affiliated, mostly as professor or graduate student, so they all read professionally. But each was by personal choice an avid leisure-time reader also. And in the discussions we held, it was the "free" reading interests that predominated. In this process, there were two small surprises for me. The first was that, although these are all busy people who did not need one more infringement upon their time, they responded so positively and willingly. Partly this was simple courtesy and kindness. But I was left with the impression that, at least in several cases, they welcomed the opportunity to talk about their reading and were glad someone wanted to hear. There was a frequent comment to the effect that no one was ever interested before. The second, and more significant, surprise was that what I was asking people to do turned out to be much more personal, much closer to the heart, than I had realized when I requested the conversations. The reading experience is inner, where we hope and dream. In spite of that, the readers responded very freely and shared openly. For this co-operation I am deeply grateful. The study could not have been done in anything like its present form without the insights of these thoughtful and generous people. Their comments appear as quotations identified by first names only. The names are fictitious.

Each discussion was tape-recorded and later transcribed. The transcriptions were very useful in the sense that often what I needed for further careful reflection was not just the general idea but the exact words in which the idea was expressed. When we first encounter a new idea, it is the idea itself that appeals, that strikes as the flash of insight. The words which happen to be used are almost irrelevant (unless a specific phrase catches our attention). But it is the words which carry the examples, the metaphors, the details that develop the idea. And transcriptions have more permanence. Repeatedly, I found it necessary to go back and see exactly (not just generally) what someone had said. This examination helped to reveal the insights, the deeper understandings in the anecdotes and recollections. It also allowed for comparisons among readers' experiences.

Checking personal perceptions of what reading is like with the perceptions of other readers assists in seeing what is shared experience amongst readers, what varies from person to person, and what is open to reinterpretation. This actually becomes a form of validation. Common ground, something vital to reading, has been found when one reader describes a personal response and another reader's eyes light up with a comment such as: "Yes, that happens to me, too!" or "I thought I was the only one who did that." There is often a smile and a sense of relief that accompanies these remarks. Recently, I asked a class of university students to make careful observations of their own processes in reading a short story, a poem, and a section of assigned reading from the course textbook. Then in small groups they were to share experiences and compare with each other. A very common reaction afterwards was: "I never knew that anyone else did that." Frequently the comment referred to behaviour they thought to be unworthy of a good student, such as flipping through the assigned reading to see how long it was, how many pictures it had, and what the conclusion said. (They also needed to learn that there is nothing wrong with any of these.) There was not only some surprise, but a profound sense of relief for them in finding out how normal and common their strategies and responses were—those they considered desirable, as well as those they doubted. When a description or interpretation is given, and the reader/listener nods affirmatively ("Yes, that's the way it is.") that is an indication that an essence of the experience has been identified.

The writing aspect is difficult to describe. Probably the most important factor to note is that the act of writing generates ideas and is a crucial part, perhaps the crucial part, of the research. It is not a matter of doing the research, then writing it up. As one searches for words, for logic, for metaphors, for understanding, the insights are in some mysterious way given birth. And in the struggle to interpret and to understand, the writing begins to take on a life, almost a will of its own. Certain topics persisted in arising and ultimately demanded to be discussed. And so they are included, even though I had not initially considered them. One or two that I had thought promising turned out to be empty. The themes and issues that are discussed are those which arose from the data, and the essences emerged in the writing and thinking.

In such a project, the reading and talking usually seem enjoyable, whereas the writing is hard work, even drudgery at times. It is easy to realize that the writing is important, since without it the thinking is not developed and the project does not exist. But in spite of the best advice of sweet reason, it is still difficult to make oneself actually write. Writers have given amusing accounts of sitting down to write and spending an hour "writing"—sharpening pencils, lining up paper, arranging everything neatly—and not putting one word on paper. I think these accounts appeal to me so much because I have a struggle to get started and to keep from stopping.

My latest experience of that is typical: in an effort to think what to write next, I gaze blankly out the window. Movement there causes my attention to shift from the ideas inside my head to the evergreen branch waving gently in the wind. It's snow laden. And I suddenly realize that the snow seems inappropriate, because while I've always stared out the window while struggling with writing, I've always done this sort of writing in the summertime. Aha, that's it. I write only in summer—not because summer is better, but because that's how my schedule has usually worked out. There's snow, so it's not summer. Therefore, I can quit trying to write. A lovely syllogism and a perfect excuse to stop. For quitting writing, any old excuse will do. Logic has nothing to do with it. Deadlines help, however.

When the ideas come to light in the writing, they frequently do not emerge full-blown, but more like buds which need to develop. Or one idea may be clear, but its relationships to the larger text are not. Or in the ongoing reading and talking, something else previously unthought of may emerge. So rewriting is necessary. Sometimes the changes needed are minor, but frequently a major restructuring takes place. This is a matter of tear and tape, throw little paragraph jewels into the wastebasket, and write new parts. A new insight that fits into the present structure of a chapter leads to one sort of rewriting, an insight that necessitates reorganization to quite another.

Reading is not linear. Thoughts and ideas spin off in all directions, circle, intermingle, cross-weave. But writing has to be laid out in a linear fashion. And so a major complexity in this writing was organization. Frequently an idea could have been built upon in three different ways. Sometimes it has been—in three different chapters. I have deliberately refrained from belabouring the writing with cross-referencing. The reader is free to make or ignore such connections. During the writing I quite occasionally felt ruefully in sympathy with Dickinson:

> I felt a Cleaving in my Mind—
> As if my Brain had split—
> I tried to match it—Seam by Seam—
> But could not make them fit.
>
> The thought behind, I strive to join
> Unto the thought before—
> But Sequence ravelled out of Sound
> Like Balls—upon the floor.
> (Dickinson, 1951, p. 439)

Nevertheless, there is a particular challenge and enjoyment in this sort of thinking and writing.

The themes that emerged became the chapters of the study. Reading always involves intentionality; it necessitates both a reader and a text. Chapter II discusses reading as a dialogue between reader and text, a dialogue in which vulnerability and response are needed if disclosure and understanding are to occur. When the text leaves space for the reader to enter, or when readers talk over a text, a circle of understanding can form, a circle which can lead to the richest interpretation within an interpretive community. This further exploration of intentionality comprises Chapter III. Chapter IV considers re-reading. How is the dialogue with a text different the second time it occurs? Why do we return to a familiar text?

A major factor in reading is time and the way in which we experience its flow, especially the familiar experience of contrast between clock time and the inner sense of how much, or how little, time has passed during absorption in a text. Temporality is a fundamental phenomenological theme and time in reading is the concern of Chapter V. Every text has a body, a structure, of its own, with stories being a very favourite form. The corporeality of stories and other structures is the theme of Chapter VI. Chapters VII and VIII explore the new world created by the encounter with text; not only the sense of reality evoked during reading, but the incorporation of stories, language and ideas into our lives. In the imagination and spirit, the inner being where we are most truly at home, the effect of the encounter with text can be profound, influencing how we think, feel, and act. This experience of reading can be significant and lasting.

THE READER

Who knows him, he who's let his face descend
to where a new existence engages,
only the rapid turn of crowded pages
will sometimes violently suspend?

Even his mother could not feel quite sure
it's he, there reading something saturated,
with his own shadow. And, clock-regulated,
can we know how much ebbed from him before

he laboringly uplooked: thereby upheaving
all the book's deepness to the light of day,
with eyes which, now outgiving, not receiving,
impinged upon a filled environment:
as quiet children, after lonely play,
will suddenly perceive the situation;
his features, though, in full coordination,
remained forever different.
(Rilke, 1977, p. 62)

The poem portrays vital aspects of the reading experience: the creation by reader and text of a new world, a "new existency"; the loss felt by those left behind in the room when a reader enters this new world, so that even a mother feels uncertain of her son; the separation between clock-regulated viewer and clock-free reader; the sense of having to make the effort ("laboringly") to shift worlds and return to the physical present; the potential to draw upon that experience with the text, to be "outgiving"; and the lasting effect of the reading encounter with the reader "forever different." Here are the themes of intentionality, temporality, corporeality, the world of the reader—a brief but thoughtful glimpse of the experience of reading calling for exploration.

Chapter II

READING AS DIALOGUE

What is it that we really do when we read? What happens? Heather replies: "Well, for one thing you are opening yourself to another voice. It's a voice and you are saying, 'O.k., I'm going to listen now, see what you have to say.'" The text is a voice. Not an object to be used, manipulated or manoeuvred, but a disembodied human voice which asks to converse with a reader.

Although oral and written language are not the same, and text is not "talk written down," a consideration of the nature of dialogue can serve to illuminate the encounter between reader and text. What is it to converse with someone? We have all participated in those exchanges which claimed to be dialogues, but which were really just each person politely waiting for the other to stop talking so that I could have my turn again. And we know the emptiness when two people are not talking "to" each other, or "with" each other, but "past" each other. Such may be turn-taking, but it is not dialogue. In some conversations, the participants exchange ideas. This is the beginning of a dialogue; the words are now going to each other, instead of past. But genuine dialogue is much more than an exchange. Language opens up vaster and more intimate possibilities than the trading of ideas, like commodities at the market. Seeing together and sharing become vital. At the very least the speaker must have something to share and the listener must be open to new insights. But there is much more.

Labercane has described a conversation as a "shared experience in which the participants interact with one another to exchange viewpoints, to argue, commiserate and to carry out the myriad of social activities for which humans are noted" (1979, p. 164). The experience is shared, not just presented as some sort of object for consideration. If there is to be more to interpersonal experience than just exchanging ideas held in common, the listener must "see" how the speaker engages with the world in a little different way (Merleau-Ponty, 1964a). This requires a certain openness and vulnerability from each participant. "Genuine dialogue cannot occur without disclosing ourselves to each other, and without according the other, and finding from the other, recognition and acceptance of how we experience one another" (Laing, 1969, p. 3). Now not only an openness of myself is called for, but an acceptance of the other. The dialogue has potential for friendship.

And the dialogue holds varying intensities and complexities depending upon the people involved. For example, "A woman and her adult son are really four people. To her there is a child and a man. To him there is a mother and a middle-aged woman. Every conversation is held on all those levels. There is always the need for sensitivity, always the possibility of hurt" (O'Driscoll, 1980, p. 38). With the sensitivity comes the possibility of further participation and fuller understanding. How a conversation between a mother and a son can hurt. But without the possibility of hurt there is insufficient openness for the genuine sharing which brings joy. The closed guardedness is in itself hurtful in a relationship that should have intimacy.

Upon further consideration, the listening and speaking processes cease to be dichotomous. Merleau-Ponty shows that listening and speaking are both active, but with no rivalry between them. Rather listening becomes a matter of "speaking according to what the other is saying." Speaking is not the taking of initiative and listening the following of initiative, but rather we are continuing (Merleau-Ponty, 1964a). And now I am tempted to think that Merleau-Ponty is describing only an ideal conversation, whereas in reality the speaker does take the initiative. That thought is checked with the awareness of how much difference a listener makes, of how the quality of listening affects the speaker's inspiration. Merleau-Ponty goes further: when two people talk, what I understand begins to assert itself in the intervals between my saying things. I hear myself in the other person, who also speaks in me. "Here it is the same thing _to speak to_ and _to be spoken to_" (p. 142). Thus, true dialogue ends the distinction between mine and not-mine, between me as subject and other as object. There is now intersubjectivity. Or to put this blending another way, a form of intersubjectivity occurs in which _I_ and _you_ temporarily become _we_. In the conversation this joining is important since all other forms, such as "he," "she," "it," indicate a setting apart (Rommetveit as discussed by Labercane, 1979).

The Text is a Voice

What then is the analogy to the reading encounter? Do readers find the text to be a voice with which they converse?

A book clearly is an object. It is held in the hands, used to prop open a window, talked about in terms of the quality of its binding and the price for which it can be bought. But a text is words, language, communication. Can words prop open a window? What amount of money is paid for language? A human being has written words on paper, ideas have been formed and a text created. The medium of print allows a voice to speak over infinite time and space, but it is still a human voice reaching out to others. When we are searching for a misplaced text, we say, "Where is that book?" and rightly so. It is the object for which we seek. But having found the book and opened it, we no longer are interested in this object "book" which we hold in our hands. It is the story, the ideas, the information—in short, the human contact, which engrosses us.

Fisher (1975) holds that objects go through four stages: (1) the warrior's sword is used by the warrior, is a symbol of strength for the community and certainly is directly useful to the warrior, (2) after the warrior's death, the sword becomes a sacred object which is kept by the priests and used symbolically in ritual, (3) the society is defeated and the sword becomes part of the loot, a treasure taken by the conqueror, and (4) the sword is found by an anthropologist from another civilization and is put in a museum. Only in the first stage is the sword "held in a knowing determined grip" and only in the last is it studied. The important details also change. The sword's weight and balance are crucial to the warrior who may regard its decoration as trivial. The anthropologist studies the design of the decoration, but has no knowledge of how the sword was held and whether or not it was a good sword.

If we accept Fisher's pattern as a typical "biography" for objects, is there an analogy to texts? Certainly texts have been objectified and treated (or mistreated) in each of the stages Fisher gives. Texts, particularly religious texts, are sometimes treated as stage two sacred objects which are in the custody of the priests and used symbolically in ceremonies but are seldom read. There are overtones of this stage in the view of the Bible that was traditionally held by the Roman Catholic church. Biblical text was not to be interpreted by the reader because of the grave danger of making a misinterpretation. So the order of events was that the priests, in their training to become priests, went to school and learned the meaning of the scriptures; that is, they were taught the church's interpretation which was the proper and correct one. Then as practising priests they used the Bible to help them remember what they had been taught. So reading was not the making of an interpretation; reading was a mnemonic strategy. Thus it is clear why the laity, who were untaught in the church's interpretation, were discouraged from reading the scriptures themselves. They were to go to the priest for any explanation they needed and get the right one. So the meaning of the scriptures was protected. And it did not matter if the texts were unavailable in the vernacular, as long as the priest could read the classical languages, or remember what he had been taught. For lay people, the Bible was very much a sacred but untouchable object. Something of this view spilled over to other texts which were to be accessible only to properly educated scholars. One of the dramatic effects of the Protestant Reformation was to alter this view of the purpose of reading. Luther began this turnabout most effectively with his classic translation of the Bible into German. Texts were changed from mnemonic devices, like notched sticks, into lively voices requiring the reader to make an interpretation and a response. In other words, texts were changed from Fisher's stage two to stage one.

Texts are less likely to be found in stage three. They have sometimes been, and could easily be, amongst the loot taken by conquerors, but raiders and soldiers usually prefer more tangible treasures, such as gold, and books are more apt to be destroyed than carried off, especially if they are written in a language that is foreign to the conqueror.

Some, however, survive and arrive in stage four. It is common enough to find in museums books whose fragile pages are carefully and maddeningly protected by glass cages. It is a profound alienation of text and reader. The two cannot get together, cannot communicate. If the light is right, the viewer (no longer a reader) may be able to see one page, which invariably begins and ends in the middle of a sentence. The voice of the text is effectively stilled, usually in the interests of protecting the paper and binding, that is, of protecting the object book. Archives are almost as difficult. In their zeal to protect aged paper or rare copies, archivists usually restrict who may read, the time available and the place of reading. But if a reader is determined enough, there is still some possibility of access.

Fisher's pattern also throws out a strong challenge to literary critics to think about whether they place texts in stage one or stage four. The critic who objectifies and analyses a text may be in the same position as the anthropologist examining the design on the sword without understanding anything about the use of the sword. Lost in a detail, which may be significant or insignificant, the anthropologist/critic may miss the larger value and intent.

So the only valid place for a text is in stage one where it is "in use," a strength for its community. And for a text, being in use entails being allowed to speak out and talk back to its reader, to hear and be heard, to be a voice in dialogue.

In describing why she likes to read ahead, especially to read endings early on, Cathy says that "it gives me an idea whether the text and I are conversing, whether we're talking about the same thing." There is that sense of dialogue, of the necessity for both to be talking and listening and to be certain of sharing at least a topic, although not necessarily a view of it.[1]

Just as in conversation *you* and *I* become *we*, so when the text and I come together *we* dialogue. The bond is formed. But it is also easily broken, at least on a surface level. An intruder coming and interrupting this dialogue does not feel the need to apologize as would normally happen in polite conversation. Depending on the nature of the interruption, the book may be abruptly abandoned and the text ignored for a time. Or I as reader may make the interruption by looking up from the text and making a comment about it to someone else in the room—not an approved practice in oral conversation. These interruptions can and do occur. But sometimes they only appear to happen. I may put the book down and go off to fix dinner, but carry on the conversation responding to the text's views and gaining insight as I do so. So the dialogue is actually continuing, at least until I have to start taking orders from a recipe.

> When you're reading, you really get involved. Are you agreeing? Are you disagreeing? Does it move you? Something's happening. 'Listen motionless and still,' you know that poem. Depending on what you're reading, it would create pictures in your mind, too. Then there's the impact of the words, the melody of the words. That's what fascinates me about some writers, it's the way their language flows in such a poetic rhythmic way. It's a real delight sometimes. That's important to me. And then you're either moved pleasantly or otherwise. Quite often it irritates you when you're reading certain things, or it makes you mad. Other times you really enjoy it. So not only your mind, but feelings get into it.

Heather suggests that the reader is both active and still. And that is so, since the stillness is not emptiness but a creative internal involvement, a willingness to be caught up and provoked into delight or irritation. There is little point in remaining detached and refusing to participate.

"On the stage of the text, no footlights: there is not, behind the text, someone active (the writer) and out front someone passive (the reader); there is not a subject and an object. The text supersedes grammatical attitudes" (Barthes, 1975, p. 16). On stage the play goes on, even though a viewer falls asleep or otherwise ceases to attend. If the whole audience is unresponsive, the performance may be less inspired than usual, but everyone knows that the show must go on. Not so, the reading. There is no adage that it must go on. If the reader ceases to be attentive, it stops immediately. There are no footlights to separate reader and text, simultaneously illuminating and blinding the text. The illumination is the reader's attentiveness and understanding. Without it the stage darkens and there is no play. Dialogue is the light of the reading encounter.

The dialogue between reader and text is very private in the sense that an observer cannot eavesdrop on most of it (although teachers are in a position of constantly having to try to realize the nature of student(s)—text dialogue). But occasional aspects are observable. Ian discusses marking up the text, that is, writing in the margins and underlining, as a form of dialogue. At first thought, this may seem merely mechanical, but for Ian it is an expression of the nature of the dialogue in which he is engaged.

> Blank pages are an invitation to write. With professional texts I write in the margins, but with haiku I do it in my head. I find it so sacred I hate to mar it. But I like to do it in my head. With professional books, I don't hesitate; I like to write all over them. I guess with professional books my attitude is that I'm a student of them. I don't regard myself as a student of haiku. It's a different sort of relationship, I think. But it never occurred to me until you asked. Why don't I? Why mark up certain books and not others? I guess it's a difference in attitude.
>
> The haiku urges me to act, to participate. I don't see myself as a reader of haiku, as a passive recipient of the messages or images. I think one of the reasons that haiku is so short is not only for the poet to capture the essence, but also to ask the reader to join in.

Ian seems to imply that the actual physical writing in books mars them and while he willingly does that with professional or informational books, those texts for more aesthetic reading should be kept unblemished. Like a field of drive snow, the text is more pristine if untouched. Heather certainly agrees.

> I've always had this great respect for books. One professor told us to get the book in paperback and make use of it, write in it, underline it, takes pieces of it to class, as long as it's useful to you when you're working. That's the important thing. In other words, rip a few pages out. To me that's a desecration. But, in the interests of practicality, if you have a lot of books to carry, I suppose it makes sense. But it was a really new idea for me to get used to. I always think of books being passed on, of someone else reading them after me. I love loaning books out so that other people can enjoy them too. Even writing in books and messing them up, I didn't

> think much of. I sometimes did that, but it really mucks them up, doesn't it? That shows my depression day background too. I was brought up in a home where books were important, you didn't have too many of them and wanted to have more. And when you do write in them, you can't always recognize your own little scribbles.

At first it may seem to be a minor point whether or not readers write in books or throw them away, and rather idiosyncratic besides. But perhaps, along with several other issues Ian raises, this one may be worth further examination.

Nancy in a rather roundabout way gives support to Heather's and Ian's respect for books. She speaks of paperbacks, especially those printed on poor quality paper and badly-bound, as disposable. That's the current attitude of quick-release publishing: paperplates, paperbags, paperbacks, use and throw away. (Canada, after all, is a major producer of pulp and paper and it's a renewable resource!) To some extent Nancy holds this view, as when she advises teachers and school librarians to be happier if the children are reading the books and be less concerned about the book survival rate, a position that makes considerable sense in view of what books are for. But in her own life, she doesn't quite live it out. She freely admits that she owns too many books and that storage has become a problem, but when she sorts them out it takes a very long time until she finds one she can part with. (And then it happens to be one her husband wants.) Who of us has not gone through a similar struggle? For Heather, disposing of books is a bit like disposing of friends. It's not done, not even to be thought of. Only if a book strikes us as quite dreadful, or maybe as filler in an airport, will we readily throw it out.

Writing notes in a book is physical evidence of dialoguing with the text. But Ian and Heather agree that it's rather messy and meddling. Also they both use fairly strong terms to describe these effects. Ian says that the haiku is so "sacred" that he doesn't wish to mar it, and Heather speaks of the tearing out of pages as "desecration." Both these words have connotations of holy places, of book-as-altar, to be respected, even revered. Not however, as special objects to be clutched to oneself. Heather finds joy in sharing books that have given her pleasure. Passing a book to a friend is for her an act of friendship, like introducing to each other two people whom I really like and who I hope will like each other.

Ian is very clear about which books he will write in: professional and informational material, yes; poetry, no. Heather is less definite, but also indicates that when she does write in books, it is only in those from which she is studying. And "studying" is the key word. While there is certainly no absolute policy about it, we tend to write in those books we are studying. A student of poetry may make notes in the poetry anthology, whereas a student of some other discipline who reads poetry for other purposes than formal study is less likely to do so. Those notes may be very valuable at the time, but they tend to have temporary use. Heather suggests pragmatically that some time later we may not even know what we meant when we wrote them.

Notes made in the margins are, of necessity, brief and fragmented. Usually a piece of a thought with which we are responding to the text. Every reader uses a sort of personal short hand also. Often they are really nothing more than little scribbles. As long as those concepts remain fresh in the mind, the meaning of the notes is quite clear to the writer. So a student who makes notes while reading and studying can usually retrace the sequence of ideas when reviewing for an exam or using the concepts in a term paper. The project or course with which the student is occupied serves to keep the topic in the foreground. But even then, it is not uncommon to return to a text after a few months, look at my own notes and wonder what on earth I meant by that. And certainly when coming back after a longer interval of time or after involvement in other pursuits, it is always interesting to see what still makes sense. I am then reading my own notes almost as though someone else had written them. Sometimes they are clear, sometimes memory helps, and sometimes they are just a smirch on the page.

For a student, notes have two purposes which may operate separately or together. They may be a comment in response to an idea the text has sparked, or they may be a mnemonic device. Or both. The student may be linking or comparing a statement made by this text with one made by the teacher or seen in another text and is simultaneously wanting to remember the juxtaposition of ideas and also doing some synthesizing thinking to bring ideas together and see how they fit or are disjointed. For the leisure reader, notes usually are a response to the text, perhaps simply the jotting down of a wayward thought that has caught the reader's interest. Usually, this is a quite personal response, especially when reading poetry.

Underlining is slightly different, since here I do not record my idea, but rather highlight something already in the text. And again the purpose can vary. A student can use underlining as a form of outlining, whereby the main ideas of the text are set off, so that a quick review is possible later just by reading the underlined words. Or an idea may be underlined because it catches the reader's fancy, never mind whether or not it is crucial to the text's line of argument. Or underlining may be a more abbreviated form of margin notes, whereby the reader underlines a phrase that triggered an idea and counts on memory to supply that same idea again later when the underlined words are re-read. This is a bigger risk with memory than most students are willing to take, but it is safe enough in more personal reading.

Writing in the margins is rather different than taking lecture notes. Margin-writing is a conversation with the original text which is still present, whereas lecture notes are an attempt to record briefly, and hopefully systematically, ideas that are passing by and will in a moment no longer be accessible unless recorded or remembered. This sort of note-taking is an aid to memory. It is similar to writing notes while reading a library book or other borrowed text. As with the lecture, the original text will soon no longer be accessible. In a lecture situation, the lecturer sets the pace and timing to which the note-taker must adjust, whereas in taking notes from reading, the note-taker controls the pace and can re-read or check spelling, but otherwise the two are similar. Of course, the reader can then take those lecture notes and write in the margins—as before. Or if the lecture is paced slowly enough, personal responses can be made at the time. But usually they will be set apart in some way to distinguish my ideas from the lecturer's "original text."

Margin-notes are very personal in the sense that they are usually too fragmented to make sense to anyone else. Someone else's comments in a library book often look like nothing more than defacing the book. But occasionally the notes are clear and meaningful to another reader. If I know who wrote the notes and I can understand them, there is a sense of seeing the writer disclosed, a sense of intimacy, sometimes too much so, like walking into someone's private space or eavesdropping on a personal conversation. ("Interesting that Paul responded that way; I wouldn't have expected him to be sensitive to that issue.") Ken gives three reasons why he doesn't make notes in his non-study reading. In the first place, his views and mood are likely to change. Coming back to a poem a year after he made the note, his response to it is likely to be so different as to make the note seem irrelevant. And secondly, the non-study reading is usually that of personal choice, often read for pleasure so that the responses to it are also personal. Pointing out that books frequently get read by someone else, Ken says that "you wouldn't want just anybody to see those very personal comments." The responses when studying are apt to be more a meeting of idea with idea, although we may sometimes be careful of those as well. Thirdly, on a very pragmatic level, non-study reading is frequently done in easy chairs or other places of comfort, away from table and pens, so that writing would be more of an effort than we are willing to make at that point.

But Ian indicated that he still carries on the dialogue whether it's in his head or on paper. That doesn't change. He does suggest, however, that he has a different relationship with different kinds of texts.

And certainly reading poetry or reading discursive writing is not the same experience. We turn to discursive writing for information, for knowledge, for keeping up to date, for explanation. Poetry is much less utilitarian. We turn to it for wisdom, for understanding. And whereas a discursive text tries to cover the subject as thoroughly as possible, poetry gives hints, allusions, images, metaphors, even fragments—but not complete statements which attempt to "cover the ground." Both relationships require active participation and critical judgment from the reader, but they call for different kinds of response and dialogue.

Is it different to be more student than colleague of the text? Ian implies that as a student he has both more and less respect for the text: more in that he is a "recipient of the messages" from the presumed expert, and less in that he is free to write all over the margins, to act like a student. He also implies that as a student he is more passive. Students can feel that way. It sometimes seems as if they are being handed knowledge in a complete and finished form and they are expected to sit still and absorb. But students who are learning something are not passive. It is possible for a student to try to do nothing more than remember what is presented. That is minimal activeness and not true dialogue, since the student is functioning more as parrot than thinker. But a student can dialogue with the teacher. Although students typically have less expertise and knowledge about the subject matter than their teachers, a student can still question, think through issues, make analogies to try out for the teacher's response, push ideas further, and of course challenge the teacher. Students who are willing to respond rather creatively are so much more interesting to teach than those who simply "write it down." Why? Is it not that only in the first instance is there real dialogue between student and teacher? From such students, the teacher can also learn. Knowledge is no longer flowing only in one direction. And the teacher-student meeting is no longer merely a matter of knowledge. With the dialogue comes personal interaction, and occasionally even a measure of friendship. Then there can be learning together. The more that happens, the more the relationship approaches colleagiality. Or to think of it in terms of the contrast Ian made (between being a student of professional material and being co-creator of the poem), as the student/reader enters more fully and freely into the dialogue, the difference is gradually obliterated and a more genuine sharing occurs. This can happen not only in face-to-face teaching, but also with text as teacher. This student-teacher dialogue in which the learning and response of each helps the other learn further is one evidence of the circle of understanding.

Freire, writing from the context of his literacy work with the poor in Brazil, points out that it is difficult to sustain a dialogue with people who are not members of one's own social and economic community. True community demands equality. The poor tend to be mute in the presence of the rich, i.e. the powerful. Though this is known to occur in social economics, does it apply to reading? Can we dialogue and generate understanding only with those texts which come from a social and economic environment we know? Well, no doubt that helps. But there are other interesting aspects to consider.

For one thing, we usually read when alone and in the relative comfort of home or at our desks, far away from the glaring eyes and forceful presences that the powerful can project or the pleading eyes and mute helplessness of those in need. That makes communication across barriers a little easier in reading. Also if we encounter in a text a totally strange custom or behaviour, we have no worries about embarrassing ourselves by not fitting into the social situation. But a text can still be intimidating if it is too foreign or formidable.

> Basically, the total context underlying reading acts would be inextricably interwoven with the total communicative situation as it exists in person-to-person interactions. In essence, this represents the shared context between writer and reader. The writer's choice of illocutionary acts (i.e., stylistic choices) along with their logical arrangement in a linear (sequential) fashion constrains, or sets constraints upon, the content and structure of the dialogue. The reader, in turn, must subject himself to the constraints set by the writer and the text itself. The words and sentences chosen by the author of the text represent personal choices; they are part of the writer's way of viewing the world. The reader understands what the author is saying according to his knowledge of the 'world' created by the author. Hence, there would be gradations in terms of the reader's grasp of the text.
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> The reader's 'uptake' of the writer's text will then depend, to a large extent, upon his grasp of the social and cultural milieu of the text along with his own personal facility with the language. (Labercane, 1979, pp. 174-175)

Another asset to the reader in crossing boundaries is that a text, especially a narrative, can be understood on various levels. Lionni's Frederick may be just a series of colourful and delightful drawings. Or it may be an innocent and amusing tale of a family of field mice preparing for winter. It can be a consideration of Frederick's character: clever and lazy manipulator or gifted poet. Another possible level is the examination of values: what is the place of the work ethnic in the life of the community; who if anybody should be excepted; what counts as work; what else is needed to enhance community life, etc. Or there can be a literary and symbolic level with Frederick seen as Greek philosopher-king and consideration given to the allusions to God's message to Job. Frederick is just a brief children's story. Yet these and other interpretive levels are possible. If the potential is in the text, then the level of the dialogue is determined by the reader. Sometimes this is a conscious choice as when a student reads a novel first to enjoy the story and secondly to examine the symbolism. But often we as readers simply dialogue at the level at which we are able. The greater our knowledge and understanding of the text's background, including social and economic, the wider the range of levels available to us.

Also, the reading itself provides a measure of the equality. Initially we need to share enough background with the text to get the dialogue started, but once begun the dialogue involves sharing and contributes greatly to the understanding. Sinclair Lewis has observed that "The greatest mystery about a human being is not his reaction to sex or praise, but the manner in which he contrives to put in twenty-four hours a day. It is this which puzzles the longshoreman about the clerk, the Londoner about the bushman" (cited by Spradley and McCurdy, 1972). Reading provides a special opportunity for the Londoner to gain understanding of the life of the bushman and thereby lower some of the barriers between them. Reading will certainly not make them economically equal, but it may provide a tentative bridge, the beginnings of understanding.

When asked about the reading experience for her, Heather replied:

> You can make contact with minds of long ago, some of them great people. Sometimes it's just simple truths that are being read. You can share this with people that you would never be able to meet or have contact with, and yet you can have this kind of contact in a book, or you can read about something that you have no way of finding out in your life, descriptions and experiences. One of the fascinating things is that everybody has their own unique experiences and some people are able to relate these in such a way that it's real to someone living a hundred years later whose life is fairly different, but with whom we have a common humanity which speaks to us. It's maybe not a very big experience, but it's meaningful. The soul or mind of the person is open to you. I find that very fascinating.

Heather's sense of being able to encounter people, experiences and places that we would never meet in real life is a point of great appeal to readers. The reading carries us out of ourselves, far beyond our own experience and allows us in a sense to live more fully and extensively in an era, a society or a social class that we can never experience literally and may never want to. (The fact that we very much want to avoid the life of a galley slave does not prohibit the reading and enjoyment of Ben Hur.) We can participate, temporarily at least, in a way of life, a set of values and a culture that is otherwise alien. Thus the foreign becomes familiar. Through reading Gone With the Wind, I join in the nineteenth century life of the American deep south, in the turmoil of a culture dying and in the desperation of having home turned into a battlefield; all well outside my personal experience. Whether I look through the eyes of a slave or a master, I see plantation life, I experience it in a way that I can never do apart from reading. This opportunity to get inside the life of another and "live along with" for a time cannot occur in the daily routine. But when the foreign becomes familiar, the familiar becomes foreign. This look at another life makes me look at my own life differently. I simultaneously have the opportunity to be an insider in someone else's life and to become an outsider looking in at my own life. Also to gain perspective about what it means to live in my time and place.

Yvonne, like Heather, is intrigued by the reading experience of finding lived commonalities with someone whose life is very different than hers. Speaking of Simone de Beauvoir, Yvonne reflects:

> Think of all the characteristics of her life: she's Catholic and I'm not, she's twenty years older than I am, she's French and I'm Canadian, she's a real academic intellectual which I do not consider myself, she's a libertine which I don't consider myself—all these differences, and yet that woman can write, and there is that part which overlaps which I think basically is being a woman. When all is said and done I think that's where the shared reality is. And her writing is clear as a bell to me. It just intrigues me that she can write like that. Certainly it isn't just me because she's a very popular writer, widely read. But we can have that sharing. And so there is an inner reality there operating. She understands her inner reality very well. She also has the gift to be able to make it articulate so that somebody else can match their own, or at least recognize themselves or recognize their experiences. Not wholly, but that's the whole point. I guess writing and reading operate on intermittent reinforcement. As long as you get enough of these little truths that you see, then you're with that person. Because there is a lot she writes that I don't agree with at all, and yet I still say she knows where it's at better than a lot of people.

How is it possible that this bond can exist? Yvonne cannot be totally correct in suggesting that the link is "being a woman" since many women do not read de Beauvoir and some men do. Yet for Yvonne that is certainly a commonality and a vital aspect of herself that she finds articulated. It is interesting that the bond is not based on shared ideas. Yvonne specifically notes the frequent disagreement and the relative unimportance of that disagreement. And in spite of the trouble she takes to ennumerate the differences in their two lives, she speaks of being able to recognize in the text her own experiences. The details of what actually happens in the two lives may differ, and the experience still be shared. The shared feelings, living and being speak strongly. Outward differences pale, if worlds are familiar.

Heather compares getting to know a person through talking with getting to know someone through reading:

> I guess it's faster in a book, because the ideas are more condensed. Well-written books have a lot of time and effort invested in what the author considers important. Sometimes it takes years to get to know someone and have them share their depths with you, and even then some people never do share on that level. Maybe I'm not receptive or the combination isn't right, so we never have that magic experience together. With a book, you can have it just like that. And there are only certain people who have that much depth to share, in either speaking or writing.

As Heather's words show, the relationship may develop rapidly. The dialogue between reader and text is at the same time more public and more private than an oral conversation is likely to be. More public in the sense that the text is publicly available and it can have very many readers. But this is rather insignificant and beside the point, if each dialogue is held privately. The very word "dialogue" suggests "words between," chosen words, shared words. And the words can become very personal indeed, a getting inside the head that rarely, if ever, occurs in face-to-face conversation.

But with texts as with people, some remain acquaintances, some repel us and some become close friends. The "magic experience" of which Heather speaks seems magic precisely because it is much treasured but cannot be commanded. Invited, yes, but not ordered up on cue, not even arranged for. But as with friendship, when it arrives, it takes us almost unawares and is very welcome.

Jeff calls the reader-text relationship a partnership and explores it further.

> It's this notion of partnership. The writer can't really take full credit for what he or she does. The reader is a very important element. Any individual can't form that kind of partnership with every writer. There are some writers I wouldn't even read because I know that I don't like them. I don't like their view of the world, I don't like their message. Some of them just offend me. And so I can't form a partnership with them. I refuse to. With some people, their vision of the world is beautiful and I can form a partnership with them. I think I put a heck of a lot into it. Any reader puts a lot into the encounter with the writer's vision. The writer can lay out a vision for you, but what you take away from it is in good part what you find there. In terms of analogy, somebody can take you walking in the mountains with them because that to them is a beautiful experience. But it doesn't matter how beautiful their experience is, unless you can feel it too, there's nothing there. Some authors can create a beautiful experience for you, and maybe what you find in the work isn't what they intended, but nevertheless they took you someplace where you can see beautiful things.

Like Heather, Jeff is careful to point out that the partnership does not always form. And in keeping with the concept of partnership, each participant has a contribution to make. The text must have a vision, a sight or insight to share and the necessary words to create the possibility of the reader seeing the same view. But the reader must also want to see, must move over in line with the text's pointing finger, as it were, and try to share the view. "The best of novels are only scenarios, to be completed by the reader's own experience. They do not give us feeling: they draw out such feelings as we have" (Davies, 1961, p. 15).

When Jeff says that sometimes he can't form a partnership, that he refuses to, which does he mean: can't or won't? For a reader who is mature and has a clear sense of personal values, they turn out to be the same. My sense of what attitudes towards others are acceptable, what truth and justice are, and what matters in life may certainly be stretched, reshaped and brought under considerable re-examination by a thoughtful text. That is an opportunity to gain insight, to extend my vision about potential nobility of character. But a total violation of my sense of values is unacceptable. If the text glorifies attitudes I reject, for example an acceptance or even glamorizing of brutality, I must say no, no matter how smoothly and seductively such values may be incorporated into the story or argument.

Yvonne approaches a text rather cautiously to see what kind of views and vision of life it is presenting. If she finds clarity and accuracy in such small details as the feeling of sand in one's shoe, or the sight of a tired, retreating snowbank, she begins to trust the text and dialogue very freely. Thus, she is open to the text's questioning and allows it to influence her. She carries the characters and the vivid sensory details around in her head. Once her trust is established, she is quite easily influenced. "If I make that initial commitment, I'm not very critical. Once I'm there, I'm with the text." Slatoff (1970) makes a similar observation that we go along with an author we believe in, even if we do not agree with everything the author says; we expect to find something worthwhile. This trust opens the way for us to learn and grow, to extend our experience and build understanding.

It also gives the text power to betray us. Martin remembers reading stories in which a character was so brutal that he (Martin) began to wish for and approve of a good violent bashing for this character, even though Martin deplores violence at any time and rejects it as a response that increases the violence of individuals and fails to show a humane and peaceful alternative. Slatoff terms this reaction a sort of self-betrayal in which I accept the attitudes of the text (practice willing suspension of disbelief) and find upon reflection afterward that I have been temporarily tricked into holding a view or attitude that I cannot respect. However, Slatoff thinks we struggle fairly hard against this. Martin agrees: "I know I have been very close to this deception, for example by approving violence, but I usually stand back and criticize or reject even as I'm involved in the story. Any belief I hold firmly enough, I can't easily be tricked into abandoning, even temporarily." Martin is a mature person whose views are quite firmly held, and he is almost certainly less susceptible to this betrayal than many readers would be. So it is significant that even he is so aware of the possibility.

Children are much more easily influenced, since their sense of what is personally acceptable or unacceptable is likely to be much less keen. Teachers and parents should be aware of the opportunity and responsibility they carry to discuss with children the views and values presented. This involves watching films and TV shows with the children and either reading with them or reading the same books as the children read, and then asking some thought-provoking questions and getting the children to talk about what they perceived. The more subtle and implicit the values in the text or film, the more crucial it may be to help children become consciously aware of them. Obviously the questions must be appropriate to the children's age and understanding, but a great deal that might otherwise be naively absorbed can be examined in the discussion. And certainly this applies as much to positive and desirable values as those which are more negative. Apart from the attention to ethics, this process is a good start toward helping the children to become reflective and critical readers, more able to make independent thoughtful judgments.

Iser, like Slatoff, raises some questions about practising willing suspension of disbelief, suggesting that it may not be as desirable as we sometimes think.

> Would the role offered by the text function properly if it were totally accepted? The sacrifice of the real reader's own beliefs would mean the loss of the whole repertoire of historical norms and values, and this in turn would entail the loss of the tension which is a precondition for the processing and for the comprehension that follows it. (Iser, 1978, p. 37)

This concern seems to imply an exaggeration of what is involved in suspending disbelief. Surely it does not require the reader to suspend, let alone sacrifice, personal beliefs and blindly accept everything in the text. Rather it asks the reader to proceed as if events that have not occurred have happened, as if fiction were history or biography. Given that realistic base, the reader can apply to the text interpretation any available experience of the world, how it functions and how its people live. What is suspended is rather minor and has the effect of making the constraints on the text more rigorous. It must be seen to be realistic and hence emerges as less strange than some actual experiences. In fantasy, the reader is asked to suspend awareness of some physical laws. The fantasy is, in that sense, unrealistic. A character may be able to travel underground or fly to another planet, with or without a spacecraft. The reader is asked, for the duration of the reading, to believe in such a possibility. But these physical laws are quite minor and easy to suspend compared to the fundamental integrity and logical consistency which not only should remain, but absolutely must remain. Logic may be altered, but never suspended. Lloyd Alexander, writer of children's fantasy, illustrates.

> The writer of fantasy can start with whatever premises he chooses (actually, the uncomplicated ones work best). In the algebra of fantasy, A times B doesn't have to equal B times A. But, once established, the equation must hold throughout the story. . . . Once admitted to his imaginary kingdom, the writer is not a monarch but a subject. Characters must appear plausible in their own setting, and the writer must go along with their inner logic. Happenings should have logical implications. Details should be tested for consistency. Shall animals speak? If so, do all animals speak? If not, then which—and how? Above all, why? Is it essential to the story, or lamely cute? Are there enchantments? How powerful? If an enchanter can perform such-and-such, can he not also do so-and-so? (1973, p. 243)

If such questions have been considered appropriately in the writing, the reader can quickly ascertain the new ground rules and read as confidently and trustingly as ever. It is necessary to proceed cautiously, watching out for hidden wires, when this consistency does not occur. The essence of personality and human relationships is not suspended, but drawn upon, even in fantasy, and certainly in more "realistic" writing. Whether we are called upon to practice willing suspension of disbelief or not, it remains true that understanding a literary work involves an "historical encounter which calls forth personal experience of being here in the world" (Palmer, 1969, p. 10). In reading we are typically asked to envision other circumstances and people, to let ourselves be drawn into other worlds, to extend ourselves, but not to deny ourselves.

The voice of the text asks to be heard. If we are unwilling to listen and to respond, there is not much point in reading. Hearing the voice of the text entails openness and some degree of readiness to be persuaded—but not automatic acceptance. In carrying on the dialogue we have every opportunity to respond thoughtfully, and thoughtfulness is a very effective safeguard against too-ready acceptance or rejection.

Estrangement to Vulnerability

The text and I, the reader, begin as strangers. That situation allows me to choose the attitude I will take. I can meet the text seeking a friendship, I can be hostile and rejecting, or I can refuse to admit even the possibility of a personal relationship at all. This latter I do by objectifying the text.

Traditional aesthetic theory distinguishes between the workaday state in which we see objects in relationship to ourselves and the aesthetic state of mind in which they are viewed objectively. Slatoff (1970) suggests that the opposite is true. In workaday terms we see objects only as objects evaluated for their usefulness, but to "see" a tree aesthetically for its colour, shape, texture is to be intensely aware of it in relationship to ourselves. But that still does not describe what the relationship is. Too often in areas such as literary criticism the text is regarded as something to be analysed. This is a rather surgical approach, and the problem is that the patient during surgery is usually in a rather poor position to converse with the doctor. "Dialogue, not dissection, opens up the world of a literary work" (Palmer, 1969, p. 7). This distinction between dialogue and dissection is vital. Dissection connotes text as an object to be put on a laboratory table, cut into pieces, microscopically analysed and probed. Dialogue implies an intelligent exchange between living beings, quite a different relationship.

Ricoeur, at one point, describes reading in terms of estrangement. "Interpretation, philosophically understood, is nothing else than an attempt to make estrangement and distanciation productive" (1976, p. 44). So reader and text meet as strangers, in estrangement. The question then is what relationship, if any, is to develop between them. And is the text to be objectified or personalized? What happens if there is no coming together?

> The goal of a literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text. Our literature is characterized by the pitiless divorce which the literary institution maintains between the producer of the text and its user, between its owner and its customer, between the author and its reader. This reader is thereby plunged into a kind of idleness—he is intransitive; he is, in short, serious: instead of functioning himself, instead of gaining access to the magic of the signifier, to the pleasure of writing, he is left with no more than the poor freedom either to accept or reject the text: reading is nothing more than a referendum. (Barthes, 1975, p. 4)

Ricoeur's use of the term "estrangement" and Barthes' use of "divorce" both connotate broken relationships, separation and misunderstanding. There seems no need nor reason for this harsh and bleak view. Why should the reader be so immobilized? Can such a state ever be termed reading? And, indeed, Ricoeur goes on to see in reading a remedy for estrangement and the establishing of a new proximity. In addition, he suggests that when we seek in reading relief from remoteness, the person we really seek to come to know is ourselves. To read is, in one sense, to read ourselves.

> In proposing to relate symbolic language to self-understanding, I think I fulfill the deepest wish of hermeneutics. The purpose of the interpretation is to conquer a remoteness, a distance between the past cultural epoch to which the text belongs and the interpreter himself. By overcoming this distance, by making himself contemporary with the text, the exegete can appropriate its meaning to himself: foreign, he makes it familiar, that is, he makes it his own. It is thus the growth of his own understanding of himself that he pursues through his understanding of the other. Every hermeneutics is thus, explicitly or implicitly, self-understanding by means of understanding others. (1974, p. 17)

The understanding of self and the understanding of others need not be posed as opposites. They go together. Through understanding my own failings I am more tolerant of the weaknesses of others, and through seeing the difficulties others experience I am more willing to face my own. It works both ways at once. But the real relief and delight is in the realization that my thoughts, feelings, responses are shared. As individuals we value our individual uniqueness, but to be too unique is to be eccentric, freakish—and lonely. We want very much to feel that we are "like others," "found out," understood, that our experience is shared. Heather spoke of "a dimension of commonness and similarity, within which unique differences occur." The details of the experience may differ, but the underlying essence and meaning we desire to have shared. Being open to the voice of the text provides the possibility of closeness.

> To begin a work is to solicit an encounter between ourselves and others present to us here and now, or through their work and its legacy. Such a beginning is of the order of intimacy and revelation in which we discover a primitive sense of closeness. Yet our approach would be unbearable if it were not like the meeting of eyes in which there can be no primacy of the self or of the other but only a kind of alternating life. . . . The encounter with someone or something new to us awakens in us a sense of openness, the sharing of need, that provides the horizon to our own vocation and is prior to all motivations of love, anonymity, creativity, or destruction. (O'Neill, 1974, p. 5)

Juxtaposed against estrangement and divorce if the text is kept distant and impersonal, we have "intimacy and revelation" if we are willing to form that partnership with the text. The encounter is not merely a matter of increasing familiarity with the text or of better self-understanding. In the "alternating life" the self and the other become "us," a kind of creative third alternative.

For teachers, an important part of the task is to facilitate this breaking down of estrangement and building of openness between student and text. Frye is quoted as saying: "All methods of criticism and teaching are bad if they encourage the persisting separation of student and literary work; all methods are good if they try to overcome it" (Dillon, 1980, p. 205). Primacy of self or other precludes the even-handed sharing that can occur through disclosure.

And the effects of the sharing are the delights that readers find in reading. Yvonne notes that she "still has that sense that somebody like Graham Greene can put into words what I really never thought another human being felt." And when asked what that experience is like when it happens, she replied,

> Oh, very powerful. It seems to me that I feel now it's very similar to having a good talk with a good friend or somebody you're in sympathy with or on the same wave length. It's that: 'You mean that's the way you felt, too?' or 'You mean that's what you thought?' Or you laugh at the same jokes. Essentially it's almost that. I think it's the disspelling of the existential loneliness, just the fact that somebody else shares the same perception, response as you had. Or even appreciation, or even something as basic as the sensory description of something. I remember a description of a tangerine that had been near the radiator, and the person had peeled back the tangerine skin and eaten this warm orange. Well, if you've ever done that, there it is. And I think that's one of the major reasons I read. Right now I'm reading Alice Monro. It seems to me she's just full of that kind of detail. It would be interesting to know how many of the details are

> familiar, but it seems that if she paints a familiar picture or describes one familiar incident, then you quite trust her on all the others. If she gives one little detail that rings very true, then you think: Ah, you do see!

Finding that someone else feels the same way as I do and laughs at the same jokes dissolves the estrangement and establishes the friendship. "Like having a good talk with a good friend." What makes a talk with a friend "good" talk? Is it not the deep sharing, the discussing of matters we both care about, the discovery that although the details of our experiences may have been different, the impact they made on us and the underlying value in our lives is shared? The fact that someone from quite a different situation may have reached some of the same views and understandings as we have can be a particular delight. There is reassurance in realizing that although our particular experiences and circumstances are narrow and peculiar to us, the understandings generated from them are not. We are not merely products of the happenstance of physical environment, but in a much broader way we are "involved in mankind" and can share the wisdom generated by our differing situations. "Rationality, or the agreement of minds, does not require that we all reach the same idea by the same road, or that significations be enclosed in definitions" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964b, p. 143). But it does require that, whatever the surface differences, there be underlying points of similarity and that these more significant overlaps be seen and felt by the participants. Out of the shaping and interpreting of the whole set of events which happen to us comes the meeting of minds. There is immense relief in the understanding that I am not alone, that this is also what life is like for someone else, for my friend. The sharing may begin with something as simple as the warm tangerine, but as Yvonne points out, it does not end there. Rather the sharing of those very minor experiences and sensations encourages what Yvonne calls the "trust" she has in an author. If the text rings true on those experiences she too has had, whether small or large, then she establishes confidence in the vision of life being presented and becomes trusting—as indeed, we do live out our trust when we dialogue freely with a friend.

The text then is a human voice "that asks to be heard and that requests a response" (Sardello, 1975, p. 275). The text not only speaks, it also listens for a reply. The text is a seeker of the way to truth and asks the reader to journey along and participate in the search. The text in that sense is incomplete. Sardello describes all creative works as incomplete. The text presupposes a reader who will establish a dialogue and supply the other half of the conversation. But that is not a matter of filling in blanks, like sticking missing pieces into a jigsaw puzzle or making necessary inferences. The reader helps to shape and guide the flow and direction of the conversation just as a good listener influences and responds to a speaker.

"In a genuine dialogue, the two interlocutors influence each other" (Kwant, 1965, p. 24). Any dialogue depends upon the contributions of each partner. And the nature of each person affects the relationship, and hence, the conversation, between them. A conversation held on the same topic with two different friends is not the same conversation, even if similar views are held. Different personalities foster different conversations and interact differently with me. Just so, each reader influences a given text and carries on a somewhat different conversation with it, as each text influences differently a given reader.

How do we know if the text hears us and is responding to our contributions? "In reading a text I can tell if my partner understands my paraphrasing if the answer which is discovered in my continued reading is indeed an answer to what I have said" (Sardello, 1975, p. 278). Just as the continuity of an oral conversation indicates a shared direction of thought, so in the encounter with text. "A dialogue always has a trend" (Sardello, 1975, p. 279). This may be the flow of thought and development of ideas in the immediate conversation or it may be the long range development, refining and altering of ideas throughout a long text or even several texts. But the presence of a trend makes the dialogue easier. After getting some idea of the framework within which the text is developing and the direction toward which it is pointing, the reader has some idea of what to expect. Jeff referred to this factor in two different aspects. At one point he said that although he finds that each book by a particular author "has its own wholeness," reading additional books by that author allows him to be "confirmed in my sense of who the author is and what kind of person the author is and what the author is saying in some generalized sense. In the case of Hemingway I got some sense of how he looked at the world, and this view would be confirmed in subsequent books." This comment seems to indicate that Jeff perceives a trend not only within a particular text but across those written by a particular author and that he uses that emerging pattern to guide him in the dialogue. Later on he commented further that authors seem to have a limited number of themes and he soon learns what to expect, in general direction at least. "My experience has been that authors, however wise they might be, are finite too like the rest of us, and they may have a particularly brilliant or illuminating insight of the world but it's a limited one." In other words, not only does each dialogue have a trend but the reader learns what trends to expect from an author.

Once a trend begins to emerge, the reader not only follows along or shares the path but also makes some predictions and anticipates the text as Tristam Shandy acknowledges facetiously and O'Neill seriously. Tristam Shandy has been describing the life and characteristics of his uncle and then puts his tongue-in-cheek to say:

> What these perplexities of my uncle Toby were, 'tis impossible for you to guess; if you could, I should blush; not as relation, not as a man, nor even as a woman, but I should blush as an author; inasmuch as I set no small store by myself upon this very account, that my reader has never yet been able to guess at any thing. And in this, Sir, I am of so nice and singular a humour, that if I thought you was able to form the least judgment or probable conjecture to yourself, of what was to come in the next page,—I would tear it out of the book. (Sterne, 1940, p. 80)

As Sterne knows very well, this thinking along or ahead of the text is exactly what readers usually do. If Tristam Shandy's suggestions were to be followed literally by authors, reading would be quite impossible!

O'Neill probes more extensively into this adjustment to and extension of a trend.

> What I am saying now depends very much on how I have approached this work, on how I try to breathe into it the sense to be made

> of it by us together once you share in it as a reader and as one who can be called upon to have some general sense of the allusions, the references, and the overall question that I am addressing. I am aware, of course, that you will not see things exactly as I do, reading rather more or rather less into what I am saying than what I have in mind to say. By the same token, there is a chance that I am thinking along the very same lines as some of my readers, or that they are even ahead of me. But whatever the background differences among us, we assume as a matter of course, though not without art, that we can share viewpoints, sentiments, and beliefs without elaborate recourse to the disciplines of logic and science. This reasoning, however, is not established without general discussion, through which we always seek the resource of agreement. (1974, p. 42)

"When we speak of a text in this manner, reading becomes an experience we undergo rather than an experience that we control" (Sardello, 1975, p. 280). To accept the text as a voice and to open ourselves to the encounter with it is to give up control of the situation. The other side of the coin of openness and trust is vulnerability. If the text challenges our views and thinking, then we as readers must be open to change. To be closed minded is to make reading a complete waste of time. What can be the point of sitting with a text if we have already decided that we know more than it does or know all we wish to know on the topic it raises? No dialogue can possibly then occur unless the text can break through our certainty. Then the confrontation of the text must be so sharp as to pierce the armour of prejudice and make us willing to consider the point of view. To be open is to be, in Gadamer's terms, "grasped by the text" and affected by it. Yvonne says that when she reads Graham Greene she "feels like Jacob wrestling with God." In the encounter of the text and my self a new self is being created.

On the one hand the text gives guidance to the encounter and acts of comprehension are set in motion by the text, but the text is not the product nor does it control the outcome of the encounter. Doug speaks of experiences in which he suddenly "knows the meat of what is being said. And it isn't just me looking at the text. It isn't one-way communication. I've constructed that meat as much as the text has given it to me because I've tied into my experiences in some way. What I've experienced is there in the text. The pieces fit in. I'm suddenly seeing myself, my life or the world around me in some better, clearer way." The understanding moves beyond the control of the text to creativity (Iser, 1978). On the other hand, the reader also does not exert control. To do so is to risk a monologue with myself. What emerges in genuine dialogue is the logos, not that of either partner but something that exceeds the opinion of either (Hoy, 1978). When the act of interpretation becomes an historic encounter or event, it "means an invasion of new experience that indeed releases one from solipsism" (Detweiler, 1978, p. 46). The impact of the text, gentle or wrenching, makes it clear that I am genuinely sharing experience, not merely talking to myself about it.

We usually think that we go to a text asking questions and seeking information or entertainment. But the reverse is equally true. In Gadamer's words, "The reader comes with answers and the text asks questions of the reader." As we read, we are asked if we're so certain of what we thought we knew. How do we know? Do we really believe this? Do circumstances make a difference? Are there preferable alternatives? Did we know this piece of information? Have we considered these possibilities? What does this example show? Are there better ways of being and relating to others? What was it like to be a medieval serf, or for that matter, what is it like to be my neighbor? The list of questions goes on from one text to another, if we have ears to hear. The probing of the text is our opportunity. If the text did not ask questions, but merely let us be as we were, settled in our complacency, reading would be rather empty, nothing more than an absent-minded pat on the back for our egos. It is the questions that initiate dialogue, invite response and inspire understanding. But we must be open to them. The book is easily closed if we wish. The text requests our vulnerability, our willingness to see even more clearly.

Experiencing a Disclosure

The official treasurer to the Queen of Ethiopia had been on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and was now on his way home, riding in his carriage along the desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza. As he went, he was reading the prophecies of Isaiah. Since he was reading aloud, it was quite clear to any listener what text he was reading and that he could read intelligibly. But when asked if he understood what he was reading, he replied, "How can I understand unless someone will guide me?" He went on to quote a passage, making clear that he understood the phrases, but asked who the passage was talking about and what it signified. In other words, he knew what the text said, but not what it was about. A literal grasp of individual sentences was no problem, but he was aware that he was missing something vital and therefore was not understanding.

A second anecdote comes from the twentieth century United States. Rosenblatt (1978, pp. 6ff) tells how she gave students a quatrain of poetry and asked them to jot down their early impressions of it before they had studied it, and to keep notes of how they went about interpreting it. These were graduate students in English and Rosenblatt did not tell them the name of the author or anything else about the lines. The quatrain she used was by Robert Frost:

It Bids Pretty Fair

> The play seems out for an almost infinite run.
> Don't mind a little thing like the actors fighting.
> The only thing I worry about is the run.
> We'll be all right if nothing goes wrong with the lighting.

A few examples of the students' comments follow.

> Upon reading . . . the first time, I couldn't make any sense out of it.
>
> I am torn between trying to put these sentences together in order to evoke one impression, and taking each as an individual entity, or perhaps even taking each as a number of word pictures and allowing myself to be borne away on whatever current each of them chooses to take me.
>
> Sounds as if it could be the producers of a play giving encouragement to backers.
>
> Perhaps the director is writing to the producer.
>
> This seems to be bits of conversation between people who are interested in movie making or a legitimate play. On second thought, the rhymes show it is a poem.

It is immediately apparent that the students in their early responses were quite tentative: "I am torn," "It could be," "Perhaps," "This seems to be." They were at this point thinking it over and wary of being too definite.

Rosenblatt, having examined many responses, makes a number of observations about how the students read. Some readers at first focused only on a line or two, then realized that the interpretation made didn't fit with the whole. The third line was unexpected and usually necessitated a revision of the first two. Some students fairly quickly realized that a literal reading was inadequate, but did not go beyond that. Others soon made a metaphorical interpretation. Some focused on a line which evoked strong personal feelings or recollections and took off from that, making up details. If the text evokes a recent and/or very emotional experience of the reader, the text tends to be interpreted, or distorted, in light of that experience. Too much baggage is brought by the reader and added to the text. Rosenblatt gives the example of a student who zeroed in on the line about actors fighting and went on about it because he was then rehearsing a play and having trouble with one actress.

Rosenblatt suggests that in examining the reading process, we have been too intent upon identifying the text with the author and have therefore not been sufficiently aware of the reader's creativity. "Critical theory and practice both suffer from failure to recognize that the reader carries on a dynamic, personal and unique activity" (p. 15). As she cogently points out, "objective" critics are still discussing their own personal creations of the text. This illuminates again the importance of the reader-text encounter being a dialogue, in which each partner is active and each has a voice.

Both the Ethiopian and Rosenblatt's students were "skilled" readers in that they were quite capable of such activities as decoding the words, combining words into phrases and sentences, identifying key words, seeing relationships within and across ideas, identifying main ideas and reciting relevant details. They possessed and used those skills of word identification and comprehension that elementary teachers are to ensure their students gain. There is, in the very early stages of reading, a natural and normal struggle to turn these strange ink spots into known and meaningful language. A beginner must go through that phase. And there is also a basic form of misinterpretation that results from decoding problems. When the text says, "Bill Smith rode his big black horse, Jet," and the child reads, "Bill Smith rode his big black house, Jet," there is bound to be confusion unless a correction is made. Many, many studies have been done in reading research on basic literal misinterpretation, in both the traditional decoding and comprehension areas. Concern for the disabled reader has been a prime focus in research and in clinical and remedial practice. That is appropriate; children in trouble need help. But the Ethiopian and the graduate students were not disabled; if given a traditional reading comprehension test they would no doubt score very high, since they appear easily able to decode, answer vocabulary items, answer literal comprehension questions, and almost certainly the one or two inferential questions that would appear for a passage. By traditional standards they would have to be judged very able readers, with high independent reading levels. Yet they were aware of not understanding, or at least, of doubt. The Ethiopian bluntly stated that he did not understand and went on to ask an insightful question that showed he understood the surface meaning but was concerned with the implication and significance of the text. The graduate students did not have the opportunity to ask, but they phrased their responses tentatively, or indicated a gradual understanding such as, "At first I thought . . ., but now it seems . . ."

Some showed dissatisfaction with their own responses. And in any case they strove for interpretations that united the passage and that reached beyond the obvious statements about a play to the richer, fuller and more fundamental implications they were convinced were there. Rosenblatt reports that virtually all the students had a sense that a more profound and unifying interpretation was called for and must be possible, but not all of them were able to make one. Some students only comprehended the poem's ideas, others were able to grasp its significance. The reader-text dialogue, like an oral dialogue, can be understood only on the surface or can reach to the significance of what it is. It may involve seeing of the text or seeing through the text, an opaque or a transparent meaning (Ross, 1974).

Even the seeing of the text, the part that the Ethiopian and the students were taking for granted, is a matter of some complexity. It has been written about extensively in reading research and application and is frequently described in terms of cognitive processes and mental skills. For example: "With written language, difficult and possibly unique skills are required to verify, disambiguate, and avoid error. Specifically, the skills involve following an argument, looking for internal consistencies, and thinking abstractly" (Smith, 1977, p. 392). Indeed, these are necessary for seeing of the text, which is a matter of cognition. And the more difficult the reader finds the text, the more these skills are needed. Consistency, for example, may not only be sought in the text, but built by the reader. In Iser's view (1978), the less the work is available to the reader, the more consistency the reader will build, partly by excluding those parts of the text that do not fit the pattern the reader is making. "The lack of availability conditions consistency-building throughout both the writing and the reading process" (p. 17). The critic, like any other reader, also builds consistency. As soon as the critic offers an interpretation, it is subject to criticism since the text could be viewed in various ways and the critic is basing the criticism on a personal interpretation. As Iser points out, a reader, critic or otherwise, may be using aesthetic norms to justify private acts of comprehension.

The reader builds whatever is necessary, but the pattern may or may not be appropriate for the text. Checking the interpretation with that of another reader can be very helpful. If two or more readers create a dialogue that has a similar trend, that is an indication that the pattern has not been too idiosyncratic, but that the text has been allowed to speak.

Seeing of, but not through, the text can be simply a partial understanding, but it can also be an inappropriate interpretation of a very subtle kind. If the reader, like the Ethiopian, is aware of something missing, there is less harm done since the reader goes on seeking understanding. But readers who think they have captured the truth of the text and are satisfied about it mistake personal patterns for dialogue and are unaware of any misunderstanding. Authors, knowing they are dependent upon readers to complete their precious creations, fear exactly that, as their occasional howls of anguish show. "There would seem to be almost no limit to what people can and will misunderstand when they are not doing their utmost to get at a writer's meaning" (Pound, 1934, p. 25). The first law of hermeneutics is said to be that whatever can be misunderstood will be. Indeed Schleiermacher contended that misunderstanding is rather natural. Before him, the assumption had been that understanding was natural and hermeneutics was needed only when a misunderstanding arose for some particular reason. But Schleiermacher turned that around: "The more lax practice of the art of understanding proceeds on the assumption that understanding arises naturally. . . . The more rigorous practice proceeds on the assumption that misunderstanding arises naturally, and that understanding must be intended and sought at each point" (cited by Gadamer, 1976, p. xiii). Certainly there are many ways that a seeing of the text can go astray.

One of them is given in Iser's argument (1978) for balance. The text cannot be taken as a fixed ideal or absolute because a reader is needed. But the reader does not have free reign and cannot be completely subjective because the text has structure and limits. Iser rejects both positions as incorrect, adding that the totally individual part comes later as the reader restructures personal experience in light of the text. The reader's use of, and restructuring of, experience may not happen as late in the encounter as Iser suggests, but his plea for balance and exchange in the dialogue is a point well taken.

Another area for natural misunderstanding is shown up by Richards (1939): the writer cannot supply the full setting but rather gives a nucleus, that which is explicitly stated. Around the nucleus there are layers of gradually less certain implications. Richards suggests that within this increasing uncertainty, reader and text can still communicate through "common principles of human life and the routine of normal experience" (p. 67). The uniformity from within is organization and the uniformity from without is experience; together they guide toward developing an interpretation. But at any point along the way the implications of text and reader might not match adequately.

Further, the reading does not proceed line by line, but rather constant readjustment goes on "to achieve a unified and coherent synthesis. The text itself leads the reader toward this self-corrective process" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 11). If, however, the reader does proceed line by line and is unable to make the constant readjustment, then an opaque reading is the best that can be hoped for. The resulting focus on detail may or may not be consistent with the spirit of the text. But even if it is, it will not lead to a transparent reading. Rosenblatt also points out that text and reader form a joint environment for each other during the reading event. "Sharp demarcation between objective and subjective becomes irrelevant, since they are, rather, aspects of the same transaction—the reader looks to the text, and the text is activated by the reader" (1978, p. 18). If the reader clings to an individual environment or demarcation, there is abundant opportunity provided for an inappropriate interpretation and an inadequate seeing of the text.

Any of the potential ways of going astray may occur at any time, making it seem rather surprising that misunderstandings do not happen more often than they actually do. For "hermeneutics has to do with bridging the gap between the familiar world in which we stand and the strange world that resists assimilation into the horizons of our world" (Gadamer, 1978, p. xxi). Anything strange is resisted because of that very strangeness. Unless we reject the new out of hand, we always seek to make the strange familiar. Sampling strange food, we try to think what it tastes like—something already familiar. Meeting a strange person we try to establish links: a profession held in common, a mutual friend, familiarity with the same town. There are many ways of bridging the gap and reducing the strangeness and they are necessary if the association is to continue. Strangeness unreduced, it will be terminated directly. And so, with text. Through the dialogue the gap can be bridged as we look for points of similarity to something already known and see if those areas that are new are in some way congruent with our thinking. The less they are, that is, the greater the strangeness, the longer and more careful the dialogue needed and the greater the chance of rejection or misinterpretation. Rejection is, at times, very necessary. We cannot, and should not, be in harmony with everything read. To reject (or accept) because of a misinterpretation is obviously problematic, however, doing considerable injustice to the text. But the gap can be bridged, sometimes very easily, and those of us who like to read so welcome the opportunity to expand the horizons of our familiarity that we eagerly initiate more and more dialogues with new text and often renew old ones.

Ingarden (1973) in his assertions about the structure of a literary work of art includes the following four which show part of the nature of the dialogue. (1) The work must be distinguished from its concretizations which result from individual readings of the work.

That is, the work itself is not the same things as one reader's interpretation of it, although it is very easy for the reader to feel that it is. (2) The literary work is a schematic formation and contains "places of indeterminacy." These are manifest in various ways, but include details not given, such as the colour of a character's eyes, and are partially removed in the concretization. The concretizations of each reader are still schematic, but less so than in the work itself. (3) While the concretization fills in the gaps, the filling-out is not fully determined by the features of the text and therefore varies with different concretizations. Although Ingarden does not spell out this aspect, the filling-out that is not determined by the text is part of the reader's contribution to the dialogue and hence is bound to vary from one reader to another, and perhaps even with different readings by the same reader. (4) A literary work has both artistic and aesthetic value. The artistic value is present in the work, the aesthetic value is potential. Again, the reader's contribution is necessary. A seeing of the text may be sufficient to see the artistic value, but it's doubtful that the aesthetic potential can be realized unless the reader is able to see through the text, make it transparent and understand what it signifies.

The metaphor of transparency seems an apt one to indicate the more insightful reading of the text since it is surely never the author's purpose to hide this meaning from the reader, but rather to speak in such a way that the reader can see through. The usual complaint of authors is that their critics have failed to read thoughtfully enough and have not taken the point. So this more significant meaning is not deliberately hidden. Although it cannot usually be put on the surface and made blatantly obvious, the attempt is to make clear, not to obscure. Ricoeur has written:

> The sense of a text is not behind the text, but in front of it. It is not something hidden, but something disclosed . . . Understanding has less than ever to do with the author and his situation. It seeks to grasp the world-propositions opened up by the reference of the text. (1976, p. 87)

Earlier (1973b) he had spelled out the same idea a little further:

> The kind of hermeneutics which I now favor starts from the recognition of the objective meaning of the text as distinct from the subjective intention of the author. The objective meaning is not something hidden behind the text. Rather it is a requirement addressed to the reader. The interpretation accordingly is a kind of obedience to this injunction starting from the text. The concept of 'hermeneutical circle' . . . does not proceed so much from an inter-subjective relation linking the subjectivity of the author and subjectivity of the reader as from a connection between the two discourses, the discourse of the text and the discourse of the interpretation. This connection means that what has to be interpreted in a text is what it says and what it speaks about, i.e., the kind of world which it opens up or discloses; and the final act of 'appropriation' is less the projection of one's own prejudices into the text than the 'fusion of horizons'—to speak like Hans-Georg Gadamer—which occurs when the world of the reader and the world of the text merge into one another. (p. 93)

The emphasis Ricoeur puts on the need for the two discourses to come together shows again the importance of the dialogue. Text and reader must be sighting along the same line. It is possible to carry on a sort of conversation with someone in which the two participants do not really see what the other is talking about and each person's response seems to the other to be quite unpredictable and something of a non-sequitur. Such conversations are usually rather uncomfortable, disjointed and hence short; the two either part or get on the same "wave length." Similarly, reader and text must establish a trend in the dialogue. Only thus can a "fusion of horizons" occur. Without this trend, there will be no transparent reading.

Ricoeur has indicated that in reading there are four types of tension: (1) tension of utterance: what does the text say? (2) tension of formal structure: how does the text speak? (3) tension of referentiality: what is the text about? (4) tension between autonomy of text and reader's appropriation: how have I read the text? The first two are available in the text, the last two are a matter of interpretation. That is, the utterance is about something and the interpretation is an inquiry into what (Valdes, 1980). Indeed, all four are part of the reading encounter, or need to be if understanding is to result. And this is a very neat and precise picture of the responsibility of each partner. Perhaps too much so. For the separation of the two must break down if the necessary unity is to form.

Amongst the requirements of a transparent reading then is the pressure of all four types of Ricoeur's tension and to some extent the resolving of the tension. That can assist in the "fusion of horizons" between text and reader. For that fusion to form the reader must be able to see in the text a unity of sense, a cohesiveness and totality. If that unity of text cannot be sensed, then either the text is disjointed and badly written, or the reader has not understood what the text is really about. It is possible to see what the text says as a series of ideas, details perhaps, and not grasp how they are facets of one whole. That sense of unity by itself does not guarantee a transparent reading, but its absence certainly precludes it. It also prevents a fusion of horizons between reader and text since the reader has not understood what the text's horizon is. So the unity is necessary, but not sufficient.

While cognition is needed, a transparent reading means also some emotional involvement or some commitment to the ideas (Ross, 1974). A reader can be dispassionate, but not detached. There must be a willingness to become involved, to see with the heart as well as the head. That also is a crucial part of being open and vulnerable to the text.

Gadamer's discussion of the I-thou relationship is helpful in showing the possible structures and control of the reader-text relationship. Gadamer (1975) suggests that the "thou" may be experienced in three different forms: (1) we seek to discover in the other typical and predictable behaviour. This is what is called knowing human nature, and the goal is to be able to make predictions and generalizations. It depersonalizes the other and entirely forgets the role of the classifier which is taken for granted. When applied to the hermeneutical problem, "the equivalent is the naive faith in method and in the objectivity that can be attained through it" (p. 322). (2) In the second form of the I-thou experience, the other is acknowledged as a person, about whom the "I" can reflect. In the struggle for mutual recognition, the other often is held at a distance, and the attempt to reflectively understand the other often involves an attempt to outdo or dominate. This claim to understand the other takes away from the other the right to speak and be heard personally. Gadamer states that charitable and welfare work—

including education—operate in this way and result in domination, although the "I" is usually unaware that this is what is happening and often enough thinks that this is a relationship of mutual respect. (3) In this form, the one Gadamer accepts, to experience the other is not to overlook the claim of the other, but to listen carefully and openly. "Without this kind of openness to one another there is no genuine human relationship. Belonging together always also means being able to listen to one another" (p. 324). The other is not somehow surveyed or assessed, but listened to in a way that tells something not only about the other, but also something about the "I." Thus, if the past is thought of as the other and the present as "I," then the past and present are not mutually distinct, but the past tells the present something about itself, since the present is "standing within a still operant history" (Hoy, 1978, p. 63). In this relationship, the fulfillment is not in methodological sureness, but in readiness for experience (Gadamer, 1975, p. 325).

The reader-text relationship can obviously take any of these three forms. For the third experience to occur, the text must be allowed to speak for itself and to tell us, not only about itself, but about us. To claim that we can predict what the text is going to say is to take away its voice and to dominate it. We must wait and listen to what it actually does say. "This does not necessarily mean that one must believe uncritically everything the other person says. In fact, out of respect for the other person one has an obligation to think through what is said as thoroughly as possible" (Hoy, 1978, p. 63). Blind acceptance of the text is a form of being dominated by it. Openness involves vulnerability, not susceptibility. And with openness comes readiness to experience and learn. The first two relationships with the text will preclude seeing through it, whereas the third opens that possibility.

Beyond cognition, emotion, carefulness, time and effort, necessary as they all are—even beyond imagination, a very special quality—seeing what the text is really saying takes more from the reader. Perfect technique, so musicians say, is not sufficient for making music. Playing based on technique or skill alone is mechanics, not art. Musicianship goes beyond the necessary technique and training to musicality, passion, and commitment to the interpretation of the score. Included in Ingarden's assertions, discussed earlier is the statement that the artistic value is present in a literary work, but the aesthetic value is potential. Like musicality, that is a requirement addressed to the reader. In reading a literary text, the reader must have a sense of aesthetic appreciation. That is not entirely a matter of having an educated taste, although education may help. It is something much more subtle that is perhaps most easily seen by its absence, as when a reader describes "My Last Duchess" as a poem about how a wife should behave or does not see Hamlet as anything more than an interesting play about such themes as avenging a murder, rightful kingship, and commitment to action. The aesthetic sense has never been satisfactorily defined, yet it determines the quality of the reader's literary experience and its absence guarantees a certain blindness. Do devotional and inspirational writings require faith? Is personal suffering necessary for Days of Terror or Man's Search for Meaning?

And even if it were possible to list all the components and dimensions of the richest interpretation, the total list would not be complete since it matters how they all come together and whether unity is formed, whether the whole text unifies for the reader and how much reader and text come together. For a reader, analysing a text, being aware of the component parts, is the least of it. Thoughtful insight, openness to the text's speaking, is quite another matter. Understanding is "not conceptualizing how a thing is made, but experiencing a disclosure" (Palmer, 1969, p. 222).

Dialogue in Solitude

"Printed texts reach man in solitude far from the ceremonies that gather the community" (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 42). But they populate the solitude with a re-creation of the ceremonies and a sense and presence of the community. Amidst the peace and privacy of the solitude, we participate in the ceremonies and the tumult, the reflection and friendships of the community.

To read:

to hear the still small voice of the text
to exchange, challenge, consider
to move from estrangement toward friendship
to be vulnerable to the slings and arrows of ideas
  outrageous or outstanding
to be questioned, examined, weighed in the balance
  so reaching for sight and insight
to risk missing, soliloquizing, but perchance to grow
to become clearer-sighted through the eyes of faith
to dialogue—in lively, living encounter

Chapter III

THE CIRCLE OF UNDERSTANDING

Space to Walk In

Ian: In reading haiku what is left unsaid urges me to move toward a filling in, if you like. It urges me to act in that sense. I guess it reminds me that I am a human being. The beingness is something we work at. I feel that the poet is beckoning me to join with him in probing into the meaning of life, the meaning of seasons, whatever, in terms of our humanness. But then it's not very often that I linger over a haiku. I guess that's because there are so many haikus, one page after another, you know. I don't think haikus ought to be taken that way, but savoured one at a time. Occasionally there is a book with only one printed on a page and white space around it. But we call that 'waste.' We put so much, not just one little thing on a page.

Some floral arrangements use very few flowers. If there are too many flowers, how can one get the flower and the non-flower together? There is the thing we call the background which is not the proper way to look at it. It's the working together of the context and itself that makes the flower. Haiku is like the floral arrangement with space. It's so short and leaves room for the reader to join in.

In a sense it's very similar to the bonsai artist who works with little trees. One way of looking at the artist is to see him as a person who shapes nothingness. He shapes branches, removes them so that there will be an appropriate relationship between a thing and a non-thing, the branches and the non-branches. Why are we attracted to the bonsai? I'm sure that the attraction is not only the curves of the branches and so on, but also the shape of what we say is nothing, but is really a lot. The relationship between the material that's there and the supposed emptiness is what the zen regard as the no-thing. I think they're right that everything is in nothing. I look at haiku in that sense. To be artful is to invite others to participate in the creative act. And the important part of that invitation is knowing where to stop. Otherwise things are too full; there's no space to walk in. The page is too full. All I can do is just receive.

The order in the poem is a reminder, and I guess the poet is asking me to read him that way. The arrangement is the text.

It is common to see in florist shops bouquets of cut flowers in which the holders are so packed full of flowers that there just isn't room for one more, and it's hardly possible to pour in water. Martin remembers watching such a bouquet being assembled.

> As the first flowers went in, it looked rather straggly. But then a pattern began to form. I thought I saw the design the florist had in mind. At one point it looked quite good. I expected her to eye the arrangement critically, do a bit of trimming and stop. But she went right on chucking in flowers. She just filled in every space. I couldn't believe it. Before my eyes it stopped being an arrangement, it lost its shape and form and became just a mass, a mess really. And this woman gave lessons on flower arranging.

According to Martin, the arrangement that was beginning to be pleasing was reduced to a mess merely by reducing the space. How should this be so? In Ian's terms, with too many flowers we can't "get the flower and the not-flower together." There is no not-flower left. And a beautiful bloom cannot be considered and appreciated within the mass; it has no space to show itself against, to incorporate itself with. And so we as viewers have no space to enter. We are shut out, excluded. By contrast, there are other floral arrangements, for example Japanese style, which use very few actual flowers but concentrate on line and form—and on engaging the imagination of the viewer. To truly see such an arrangement is to be open to the beauty and the questions: what does the single clean line curving upward signify? Why is it that two such foreign substances as a delicate flower and a piece of driftwood seem to be in harmony? How does the combination speak to me? The arrangement provides openings, space, an invitation to enter. The viewer is asked to become co-creator.

Ian illustrates the same creation of opportunity by the bonsai artist. The artistry is in understanding what to remove, how to create space. And the space is important to the art. How can the curve of the branches be seen except as presented with non-branches? And so the space is not nothingness, but an integral and integrated aspect of the bonsai, without which it cannot exist. If there is no space, a bonsai has not been created.

Ian makes the analogy to the presentation of haiku on the page. They are by definition very short, only three lines arranged in five, seven, five syllables per line; so there is plenty of room on a page for several of them. But as with the bonsai, the white space of the page is a vital part of the presentation of the poem. Strung along one after another they look like several stanzas of one poem, instead of each being complete in itself. And since our eyes are used to moving systematically and fairly quickly down the page, they tend to keep doing that out of habit, not giving the mind time to consider each poem. The effect is similar to the too-many-flowers; we are unable to appreciate one for all the others crowding in and producing a jumble. The consideration that is due each poem as a small but complete work of art is given with difficulty, if at all.

But in writing not only is physical space of concern, even more so is space in the ideas and concepts. While this is true of writing generally, it is certainly so in poetry because of its conciseness. For example:

Under cherry trees
The soup, salad, fish and all
Seasoned with petals.

In such a poem, the reader is invited in. The welcoming space is there. The poem gives enough of the picture to invite a filling in. What is the event? A picnic? What is the season? Cherry blossoms are very beautiful. But perhaps only as long as they stay in their place. Falling into the food reduces their appeal. Since the agriculturalist's definition of a weed is a plant out of place, are these petals bordering on being regarded as weeds? There is amusement in the incongruity of the beautiful blossoms becoming the source of irritation, of the two kinds of beauty, lovely flowers and good food, somehow being at odds with each other, of the blossoms being unpalatable now but a direct link to delicious fruit in several weeks. The specifics of the interpretations readers make will differ, but each reader will have to move into the space in one way or another if an interpretation is to be made and any understanding is to occur.

And again, that space or silence is not emptiness. "The movement from silence to speech is not a movement from nothing to something, from non-meaning to meaning. The silence that precedes and surrounds speech is not a void, but a silence with a promise of speech, a silence pregnant with meaning, like a pause in a conversation, or a gap between each ring of the telephone. Speech is a progression to a linguistic meaning from the more primitive field-structure of experience, which is itself already a primordial level of significance with a potential for more complex layers of meaning to be constructed on top of it" (Spurling, 1977, p. 51). As with speech, so too with written language. It is constructed upon experience which has its own kind of silence since it can be variously interpreted, and then the language itself has space.

It is these gaps in the text that allow the reader's imagination to become active and participating.

> If one sees the mountain, then of course one can no longer imagine it, and so the act of picturing the mountain presupposes its absense. Similarly, with a literary text we can only picture things which are not there; the written part of the text gives us the knowledge, but it is the unwritten part that gives us the opportunity to picture things; indeed without the elements of indeterminacy, the gaps in the text, we should not be able to use our imagination. (Iser, 1974, p. 283)

If the mountain is present, it is as it is. The viewer may observe it as carefully or as casually as desired. But if the mountain is absent, the viewer must first help to build and shape it. This involves a much more intimate knowledge and involvement than merely looking at it. So the reader must participate. The written part of the text gives knowledge. But knowledge is only the first, less personal part. It provides such descriptors as stimuli for the reader's imagination. The dialogue thus formed allows for the co-creation of story.

Nancy speaks of "involving the reader to be receptive," indicating that the text must somehow "hold" the reader. That holding certainly includes engaging the reader's imagination, and for that to happen, the imagination must be given something to work on and something must be left for it to do. The more complete the text, the less involved the reader will be.

Otherwise, as Ian says, "Things are too full; there's no space to walk in. All I can do is just receive." The dialogue has become a monologue. The text is refusing to give me my turn, to listen and to respond. Jeff expresses a very similar view based on his experience:

> The author has to be subtle and keep the situation open so that you can come in. If it's closed off and the message is too obvious, there's no room for you to come in. This is similar to what happens at some lectures. At the end when the lecturer asks for questions, sometimes there aren't any, and I think it's because the lecture was a closed system. It answered too many questions. Either you're left with the feeling that all your questions have been answered satisfactorily so why ask questions, or you feel that the lecturer anticipated my questions, answered them and is closed to any further exploration. I suppose a good set of themes are those which by their very nature are on-going: on-going dilemmas, on-going mysteries, and the best that anybody can do is shed a little light on them.

A message that is closed is one that is too blatant, too "preachy"; there is no opportunity for the reader to play with ideas, speculate about alternatives or draw logical conclusions. It is like listening to a speaker who speaks too emphatically and whose strident tone shouts down any opposition. The listener can nod in agreement or keep quiet but there is no pause in which to speak. The listener who tries will be drowned out, especially if the comment begins with "but." This monologue is wearing, and usually we walk away from it as soon as possible, which in reading means we are likely to put the book down unless required to slog dutifully on. But there is no partnership, no shared world—just an alienating sense of being talked at, told.

How much can writers say? Everything? Tristam Shandy had decided views on this subject, as on most others!

> Writing when properly managed, (as you may be sure I think mine is) is but a different name for conversation: As no one, who knows what he is about in good company would venture to talk all; so no author, who understands the just boundaries of decorum and good breeding, would presume to think all: The truest respect which you can pay to the reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself.
>
> For my own part, I am eternally paying him compliments of this kind, and do all that lies in my power to keep his imagination as busy as my own. (Sterne, 1940, p. 108)

Iser speaks in rather more sober and dignified tones, but the point remains the same:

> The author of the text may, of course, exert plenty of influence on the reader's imagination . . . but no author worth his salt will ever attempt to set the whole picture before his reader's eyes. If he does, he will very quickly lose his reader, for it is only by activating the reader's imagination that the author can hope to involve him and so realize the intentions of his text. (Iser, 1974, p. 282) .

Again, monologues are dull, the reader must be held receptive and expected to do half the work. It takes two imaginations to make an interpretation. From the writer, this requires a delicate balance between telling enough but not too much to engage the reader. In Owen Wister's The Virginian, the main character is seen through the eyes of a friend. We are shown a considerable amount about the Virginian, his ranching skills, his story-telling, his handling of other men, his sense of justice and of humour; but much remains unknown: we never really know what he's thinking, and even his name is used only once in the whole story and that during an execution scene. His background, the making of the man, is missing. There is enough there to build a character and enough missing to be intriguing. So the imagination goes to work.

Poetry typically issues this invitation.

The way a crow
Shook down on me
A dust of snow
From a hemlock tree
Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.
- Robert Frost

Each of us has experienced how a tiny happening can turn a day round, make it seem different, for better or worse. And we begin to supply our reasons for ruefulness and our own saving incidents and to appreciate the small reprieve offered from troubles. So it is that writing anticipates the necessary process of reading, and writer and reader are required to work together through the text (Iser, 1978). As an aside it is interesting to note that if both writer and reader are necessary to create art, there can be no such thing as art which is only self-expression and which does not wish to communicate. But that does not preclude working ideas out on paper which is a form of talking to myself and is still a dialogue, even if the writer is the only reader.

Merleau-Ponty (1964a) suggests that the sorrow of language is that to speak is to be unable to say everything. And of course, that is so. Language has its inexpressible dimensions. Also, how familiar is the sensation of having many ideas, some only half-formed, running around in our heads, but being able to express only a few, only one at a time, and sometimes not even to be very clear or cogent in expressing that one. As soon as we start to express one, others get crowded back and some are forgotten. (Sometimes that's just as well.) In addition, there are those which are in the form of tacit knowledge and therefore are known but inexpressible. However, if the sorrow of language is that not everything can be expressed, the opposite is equally true: the joy of language is that to speak is to be able to communicate something, to share. Merleau-Ponty implicitly acknowledges this since he comments on the confidence that speakers and writers have that they can convince others and can say something significant. And being convincing involves not only doing some persuading but also knowing when to stop. Fortunately, we need not always be convincing either; there is also the pleasure of sharing ideas in order to explore them together.

Hirsch (1976) holds the view that although not all the author's thoughts when writing are sharable, the interpretation of texts is concerned with sharable meanings, and further, sharable meanings are both conscious and unconscious. So far, Hirsch's view seems similar to that of Merleau-Ponty and fairly easy to defend. Authors when writing make many and constant choices about which ideas to attempt to share and which to eliminate or ignore. In addition, because reading is such an active and interpretive process, readers often see meanings authors did not consciously include. But Hirsch is very firm and forceful in his view that the true interpretation is that intended by the author, and the reader's task is always to determine the author's intention. Here a problem arises for Hirsch. The author's unconscious sharable meanings can hardly be intentional. Can an author intend meanings which are unconscious? If not, is the reader supposed to find them or not? The concept of interpretation as author's intent, sometimes termed the "intentional fallacy," seems to have several such difficulties.

Language may have its aspects of inexpressibility, but Sontag (1964) asks who would want to say "everything that can be said." She suggests that this is becoming the goal in a society that stresses psychotherapy, has technological equipment to record and reproduce speech, that is overpopulated and unable to distinguish between information and secrets. The corollary of the attempt to say everything is necessarily that much that is said is rubbish. The coin of language, like any other coin, is debased if over-produced. The listener or reader feels assaulted by the barrage and asks for relief from the verbiage and for silence in which to think and imagine and space in which to respond. To write provocatively and sparingly is not easy. Journalists speak of publishing long essays or articles because they did not have time to make them short. Just as judicious pruning provides space for the remaining branches to develop more fully, so wise editing cuts away the nonessential and refrains from telling all.

Although the idea of the text having gaps for the reader to enter is important with any text, there is an additional aspect that applies only to narratives. That has to do with the amount of privacy that characters in a story are allowed. Steiner (1978) makes the argument that great novelists, such as George Eliot, Henry James, Tolstoy, allow their characters some privacy with a zone of freedom around the characters containing elements, especially sexual, which the authors realize but do not verbalize. In Steiner's view, modern novelists control their characters much more. And what happens when the control is made as complete as possible and the characters' privacy is entirely stripped away? One result is pornography. What makes pornography is the writer's attempt to tell and reveal everything, leaving nothing to the reader's imagination. If the text attempts to tell absolutely everything, the result is a long, tedious story, rather like that told by a child who insists on repeating every detail of a TV show just seen.

But although Steiner may be right that modern novelists control their characters more than was done in the past, modern texts often have other sorts of gaps. They tend, for example, to begin _in media res_ and leave it to the reader to work out some of the setting and context. Or the leaps between chapters or segments may be discontinuous or unspecified, resulting in a somewhat fragmented text which in turn forces the reader to make the connections and be more consciously aware of making them. An interesting difference between nineteenth and twentieth century novels may well be in the sort of gaps they leave for the reader.

One apparent distinction is that twentieth century novels are more likely to be sketchy about the public aspects of the story such as setting and society, and concentrate more on the private areas, especially personal introspection, whereas nineteenth century novels frequently give full, even lyrical, descriptions of countryside, housing, manners and conventions but are much more discrete (incomplete?) about intimacies. Both types to be considered successful must create characters, dynamically and vividly. So both are personal in that way. But they do invite/incite the reader's attention and imagination differently. The twentieth is the century of psychology, one indication of which is the inward focus of much of its literature. The eyes can see only one direction at a time and so the world at large exists only as it impinges on the individual. The contrast may be seen for example, by a twentieth century reader reading _Wuthering Heights_, a nineteenth century novel which has a focus on personality and inner motivation but is handled very differently than it would be in our time. There is one incident in which at the close of one chapter a young woman is out working in the fields at harvest time and across the page in the first paragraph of the next chapter she is caring for her new baby. That is the first mention of a baby. It arrives as if there were no such thing as pregnancy with an abruptness and decontextualization that jars modern readers.

A more subtle difference is indicated by Booth (1979) when he speaks of writers who "refuse to take a stand" and therefore produce texts that are "unstable." The text does not declare itself for anything and hence leads to a kind of nihilism. The text attempts to show that life is empty of meaning. But that is itself a statement with meaning. The attempt to show that life is empty of meaning leads to an empty non-truth. Booth uses the work of Samuel Beckett to illustrate. Any reader who believes that life does have meaning will readily accept that the premise that it does not must end in a non-truth, if not an untruth. The reader is left with this instability, which may be not so much space to walk in, as a very large hole, almost a vacuum. This is a modern approach. It is hard to imagine any of the prominent nineteenth century novelists refusing to take a stand or producing texts with such instability. They could be rather heavy-handed on occasion. Iser (1978) makes a similar case on the basis of consistency. Readers like consistency and try to build it. But modern works with inconsistencies as an integral part of them cannot be interpreted by the classical norms, which assumed that each work represents truth and therefore the elements of it will be harmonious. By classical norms the reader could build some consistency. These norms simply do not apply to a text that assumes inconsistency.

Whether truth necessitates harmony and consistency is not the issue here. But the question does point up a difference in underlying assumptions, and hence in space left, in different novels.

But of course the differences are not exclusively a matter of century.

> Jeff: Writers vary in what they leave room for your imagination to work on. Take a storyteller, like Trollope. What he stimulates my imagination to work on is the people, his characters. He causes you to make his people real. One way he does that is by bringing people alive through their speech, their dialogue. I would know a Lady Glencora if I saw her. Or take Mathiessen and Hemingway. Two very different writers, but in the very spareness of their approach they stimulate your imagination differently. Reading Mathiessen is almost like reading poetry. Indeed Far Tortuga could be called a prose poem. The writing is not only spare, but so ridden with metaphor. Mathiessen gives a sense of penetrating to different layers of reality, of entering a realm of existence that goes beyond the events and people you are reading about. It's not the events, the people, the plot that keep you reading, it's that otherwordly sense that he evokes. Maybe I should amend what I said earlier. I suppose my imagination is stimulated in a more profound way with Matthiessen than with Trollope.

Although other readers might not choose the same writers Jeff speaks of, most of us can name an author who has particular evocative power for us, who seems to leave the gaps exactly where I need them. This is some subtle combination of suggesting ideas and images that catch and fuel the imagination so that it does not merely follow the text but moves beyond it, and of the text leaving an exit point, a gate, just where the imagination wants one, so that the imagination temporarily leads the way. But only temporarily. The gap must also serve as a re-entry point, so that reader and text can come together again and sustain the conversation.

The type of text may also affect the sort of gaps left. In academic writing, as Doug says, "We're supposed to cover the subject completely, make it a closed system without space. In fact, if the reader finds a space, it's likely to be regarded as a flaw in the organization and development of the argument. Sometimes you even deal with the implications of what you are saying and carry the reader along." The problem here is not one of logic. Building a logical and closely reasoned argument may in fact provide, rather than preclude, space. The question is rather, do all the possibilities and potential directions of an argument have to be either examined or cut off like cul-de-sacs? Or can some be hinted at and left for the curious reader to pursue? Should a text raise options and "I wonder if . . ."'s?

Jeff also compares types of writing.

> Space seems to be a difference between fiction and academic writing. This is the notion of co-creation. Because of the looseness of the fabric of prose and poetry, you are able to bring your story into some kind of conjunction with the author's story. And there's room for you to struggle if you want to. Or it may not be a struggle. In Tolkien you just put the book down and live in that world for a moment. Or with Who Has Seen the Wind you are pulled into remembering your own childhood and exploring it through Brian's, and thinking about what it's like to grow up. You feel you are understanding life a little better. And death too.
>
> Now academic writing can't do that. It doesn't leave that kind of space. In academic writing you are adding to the fund of knowledge. And that very metaphor is based on some kind of notion that you can have a fund of knowledge as you have a fund of money and put knowledge into the fund like making deposits in the bank. Those are quite independent of you or me. Once you put a deposit in, it's tangible, it's pages added to the fund. I think prose and poetry make no such claim to be adding to a fund. Their influence is insofar as readers get brought into becoming co-creators. Unless the readers get brought into interaction with the prose or poem, nothing has happened to them.

Jeff's view, at least of the relationship to literary writing, is very similar to Ian's cited earlier that he is a partner in the interpretation of haiku. Both feel that literary text gives a great deal of freedom. It invites, but does not coerce. The text presents a picture, a vision, a story and the reader is free to choose a response: we can put ourselves into the offered picture, reject it, shape it, live in it, or try to harmonize our view and experience with that which it offers. That latter position, Jeff's "bringing our story into conjunction with the author's story," suggests the meeting of two solitudes, the touching of realities, the welcome invasion of our life by another and of that other life by us. We decide whether and how much to let this happen, but we must decide. What we really can not do is hold such a text at arm's length and wait and see. Not for very long anyway. The freedom is ours, but it must be exercised.

Jeff's and Ian's views of the relationship to academic writing seem at first glance more disparate. Jeff speaks of a "fund of knowledge," Ian of being a "student of" such text. But what is it that a student does? Is it not that to be a student of something is to dip into the fund or pool of knowledge, to become as immersed as possible in it, to draw from it (although this in no way diminishes it), perhaps to contribute to it, but not to personalize it nor create it and write ourselves into it. To be a student is to be a follower, a disciple, and therefore to accept the constraints of the subject studied. The student willingly gives up a degree of freedom in order to learn, that is, in order to be given access to the fund. The structure of academic writing and the arguments allowed is somewhat constrained, but is a voluntary and necessary discipline in the search for knowledge. The relatively fewer and narrower gaps are part of the constraint.

Like trying to peer through the hedge or through the narrow gateway, a gap in the hedge, at an old stately house hidden there, the fascination of the gaps is the partial sight, the flash of something uncertainly seen, the now-you-see-it-now-you-don't experience. Readers are intrigued by the need to make inferences, the necessity of figuring out if the text is really saying what it has not directly said. There is the sensation of, "I think this has to be what is indicated, but is it really?" Similarly, when a story can make us race ahead keen with suspense, is the suspense not born from our forecasting the various outcomes, especially the catastrophes, that might occur. The text has not told us they will, but we have moved into the story and seen possibilities, some of which we hope for and some we hope against. If we would not anticipate and would not care about the outcomes, there could be no suspense. The creation of a particular sort of gap in the text, that invitation to guess, and our entry into the gap, together bring about suspense.

The problem of closing the gaps can sometimes occur in literary criticism. It too often tries to define what is indefinable and make a closed system out of that which must remain open (Iser, 1978). In Barthes' (1975) more exotic phraseology: to judge a text according to pleasure does not lead to critical evaluation. Barthes almost seems to be suggesting that any reader who wishes to read critically had better not enjoy the text, a view that would certainly be rejected by Iser (and perhaps also by Barthes). The critic, who is both reader and writer, must be sensitive to the spaces and to the opportunity they provide for dialogue, since the critic, like any other reader, must be willing to hear the voice of the text and to engage reflectively in dialogue, rather than to dissect.

Barthes (1975) also suggests that the text encourages the reader to make personal selections which are, in effect, the provision of our own gaps: "It is the very rhythm of what is read and what is not read that creates the pleasure of the great narratives: has anyone ever read Proust, Balzac, War and Peace, word for word? (Proust's good fortune: from one reading to the next, we never skip the same passages)" (p. 11).

Some speakers, public or private, deliver monologues, others stimulate conversations. As Barthes is implying, the same is true of authors. An author like Frank Smith or Ivan Illich evokes, some might say provokes, response—of whatever sort. With such texts it is difficult to remain indifferent. That provision of provocative text is another sort of gap that eases the reader's entry into the dialogue.

If the text stimulates ideas, makes us wonder, raises more questions than it answers, it is initiating but not dominating the dialogue. We are recognized as equal partners. And such texts illustrate the wisdom of the old show business maxim to leave them always wanting more.

Talking It Over

One way that readers use to get "more" from the text and in addition to the text is to talk with other readers.

> There's nothing I like better than to read a book and talk it over with somebody. And that it seems to me is another dimension of sharing because it's not just you and the text, but it's you, another person, and the text. And very seldom are all the circles overlapping. What the other person got out of it

> isn't the same as what you got out of it. I love that. It just sharpens everything. I think I'm fairly easily seduced by an author. So I like to see the views of others. I really like this book club, which I don't get to often enough, but really enjoy when I go. But I can't say I've had much of that in my life. Reading has really been solitary. But now people sometimes suggest books, so that we share and talk about them.

Yvonne gives at least three interesting reasons for wishing to talk over a text. First, there is "another dimension" to the sharing, a face-to-face meeting not possible with the text. It is the nature of friendship to be inclusive, rather than exclusive, so it's easy to welcome another person, a friend, into the dialogue, and thereby increase the sharing. That leads directly to Yvonne's second appreciation of the discussion with others: the differing views that are likely to be expressed. Two readers can check out the similarity of their interpretations of a particular text, and if differences become apparent, as they are likely to, discuss those. Not only is it interesting to compare views and ideas, but the discussion can lead to further insights for one or both of us. Yvonne expresses particular delight in the sharpening of her understanding that comes through this sort of dialogue. And thirdly, Yvonne suggests that she doesn't read critically enough, that once persuaded that a text has a message for her she accepts it a little too willingly. Another reader can help her to be more thoughtful and reflective. This acceptance happens easily when we find the text persuasive and appealing. Another reader, whether more doubtful or more convinced, can help us put our own views in perspective, partly by contributing ideas or emphases that did not occur to us.

Yvonne in her comments is very clear about two points: that she likes to discuss what she has read, and that the opportunity seldom arises. Both seem common experiences, as other readers verify.

Alice, in discussing how the significance of a text can change for her upon reflection after the reading, continues:

> It changes even more if I'm able to discuss it with somebody else. Then things can spring forward and a whole new meaning arises for me. But I don't have the opportunity to discuss books that often. When I did belong to this little book club, we did do this. But then you're forced in a lock-step, you know; everybody has to read the same book. Right now what happens is only on a very informal level. I have a friend down the street and we occasionally swap books. But it's not going into something in depth. Often she'll make a comment and that will spark something for me, and I'll say something, and the thing will have been clarified for both of us. This is helpful even if it happens long after I've read the book. It's not immediate. And then I find it's enlightening but it's also a shared experience.

Again there is the wish for more discussion than opportunity provides. Book clubs can be enjoyable, but usually don't seem to work well; they are too contrived and artificial. Everyone must read the same book, so that the independence we value in our leisure reading is lost. Usually someone must lead the group and guide the discussion a bit or it founders on the rocks of irrelevancies. A book club almost becomes a class without a teacher. But it has none of the commonly held advantages of a class: the fixed organization, the guidance of someone with more knowledge, the sense of disciplined work, even the academic credit at the end. Theoretically this should make the club more fun, but experience seems to be that it is less satisfying. Alice prefers the informal and infrequent chats with her neighbour, but in either case regrets the absence of further discussion.

Heather talked about why the opportunities seem to be limited.

> I'd probably like to talk with somebody about my reading more than I get the opportunity to. I'm always quoting out of books and telling somebody something I've read. And sometimes I wonder what my friends think of somebody who's forever quoting somebody else. Years ago, a friend who is sort of a character anyway was outlining a job he wanted me to do and he said, 'You could quote all you wanted.' I didn't think I was quite that obvious. When I find a text difficult or interesting, I'd like to talk about it. But in general, the world's not a good listener, even one's friends. So I'm always kind of aware of talking too much. How do we know the listener is even interested if he doesn't get a chance to talk also? There aren't many people that want to sit around and talk about reading. Or is it that other things always get in the way? When you get together it takes awhile to get around to talking about ideas. You don't choose your friends on that basis. I've never asked a friend to read a book so we could talk about it. It's such an individual matter what books you choose. It's really a private thing, what you want to read. When I was growing up, we got told. My father assigned certain things for us to read. I'm not sorry about it, and it helped me a lot, I'm sure. But it was something we had to do.

Heather mentions quite a number of factors that influence discussions about reading. Some are more superficial and could be overcome, such as the need for a "warm-up" period to get the conversation going and be sure the mood and harmony between two friends is suitable for raising the issues of interest in a text. And the matter of allowing the other person to have a turn to talk is a normal part of any conversation and necessary for any topic. Spaces in the dialogue are at least as essential in conversational dialogue as in reading dialogue.

Two other matters Heather raises are more difficult. She notes that the world, even that part of it which is our friends, doesn't listen well. Why not? Why do we want just a little more than our share of the conversational time? One particular friend who is quiet and hesitates before speaking reports that in all her professional contacts she has met only one person who can be counted on to wait for her to finish speaking. Sometimes this seems a matter of isolation in our personal concerns. We get so near-sighted that we are unable to see as far as the concerns and interests of our neighbours or friends. The blinders confine us within our own borders, so that there is no chance of seeing the landscape another sees. But the exact opposite perspective can also keep us from listening well. We may see, or more correctly we think we see, so exactly what the other's landscape is that we are unwilling to wait for the words. If my friend begins speaking and I am certain of the direction this concept is going, I think I can see well down the road ahead, I may not wait to see if what is said actually matches my expectations. Then if it does not, if the road has an unexpected fork, either we've come to a parting of the ways, or I have dragged my friend along the road of my choosing, instead of following the one originally intended. My impatience has detoured the conversational vehicle and I am rightly perceived as a poor listener. To stand shoulder to shoulder with my friend and carefully look the same direction requires a patience not often exercised but when used is rewarded with an alleviation of loneliness and a special shared oneness.

The other difficulty Heather points to is how private our personal reading is. This does not apply to professional reading or assigned reading of any sort that we feel obliged to do in connection with our work. But those texts that we read only because we want to read them and regard the reading of them as a pleasure are very private choices. They have nothing to do with what other people claim to enjoy, what is on the best seller list, what our responsibilities are or even what others urge us to read, although that may sometimes make us willing to try a particular text. If we each exercise this choice, it stands to reason that our friends will often not be reading what we are. Occasionally we do not even want to admit to these choices. Pat speaks rather sheepishly of some very light reading she does and describes it as "the kind you hide so no one will know about it." But our leisure reading may be influencing what we think and how we view a particular issue so that we would be happy to talk about it if a friend wanted to. So then it becomes a matter of thinking alone, or of being persuasive enough about the pleasure and interest of a particular text to whet a friend's appetite. We do not always want our privacy intruded upon in this fashion, but the price we pay for the privacy is the lack of discussion.

Heather specifically separates what she chooses to read from what her father instructed her to read. Her use of the word "assigned" indicates her perception of the reading as a school task. It contributed to her education and she has no regrets about that, but it was assigned reading, and in that sense public rather than private.

In time past reading was often less private. The family would gather in the evening and one person read aloud as the others listened. This procedure at least provided the possibility of discussion since everyone was together experiencing the same text (although each reader/listener could still have a personal encounter with the text). Our habit of silent reading has altered that and made reading very much more private (it may be that no one is aware what we are reading) and singular (it may be that no one around us has read or cares to read the same text). The social aspect of oral reading disappears in silent reading so that ". . . extreme conceptions of individualization have desocialized the reading process. Reading can be the basis for recovering the lost art of conversation. It can provide grounds for debate, speculation, the comparison of alternative interpretations of meaning" (Eisner, 1976, p. 12).

When these discussions occur, they often lead to re-reading. Doubts about our own interpretations may be raised by the comments of others, or we may seek evidence to uphold our own point of view—and may or may not find it. We can be very confident about our views and the correctness of our interpretations as long as they are not shared with or challenged by others.

Readers identify a difference between professional and personal reading, in that professional reading, being work-involved, is somewhat more likely to be discussed.

> Lengthening the distance between reading and literary study is the fact that reading is a private activity, a relation between the work and a single self. Often it is a very intimate relation, involving the deepest parts of one's being. Yet the study of literature is essentially a public activity; even the smallest and most intimate seminar is a public occasion in which one is talking with relative strangers. (Slatoff, 1970, p. 9)

In a university setting, it seems reasonable to expect a great deal of this seminar sort of discussion. And some of that happens, as Doug recounts.

> Professional matters are the stuff that really gets batted back and forth a lot. I think that has a major importance; I almost think it's essential. A person pursuing a matter long enough independently may be able to construct much the same meaning that comes through benefit of exchange of ideas, but discussion is a terribly helpful thing. Doing something with the information after reading is important—maybe talking to somebody, but also doing something.

Spoken like a true teacher! This notion of demonstrating mastery of information by using it to do some sort of task underlies the principle of school assignment-giving. And of course, that is often how we check our own understanding, by making a practical application.

Many comments on discussing ideas read centre on the student-teacher relationship, along with an emphasis that if the discussion is to be helpful it must be held with the right person. What makes a person the "right" one seems to be a person whose knowledge and judgment we trust. Doug again:

> I like to talk with somebody, if it's the right somebody. There are people I wouldn't want to talk to because I think people would get defensive, be at each other, and it wouldn't be beneficial. But it's a major way to try to clarify what you think and to weigh evidence. Whether one talks to other people or not I think depends on who the people are around them, whether they have some shared experience and similiar backgrounds. It would be a major way.

Cathy comments:

> When I'm having difficulty understanding something, I generally like to talk to somebody. When I was in the master's program, I used to go to my advisor. He would help to clarify it a lot. He can often attach a concrete example to it, so that merges theory into practice. I don't know what I'd do if I didn't have somebody to talk to. I don't think I've ever been in that position where there was something that nobody knew anything about. But with novels, I don't particularly do that. If there is someone who by coincidence has read the same novel I have, I enjoy discussing it. But it's very seldom that I talk about a novel I've read, otherwise.

Again, there is the strong sense of difference between personally chosen, perhaps leisure reading, which is unlikely to be discussed, and work-related reading. Students expect as a matter of course that they will be allowed/required to discuss instructional reading—and to discuss it with a teacher who "knows." The distinction Ian made earlier between regarding himself as a student of the text or a colleague/co-creator of it holds.

Martin notes that "University students, perhaps even graduate students, are reluctant to do assigned readings if they've found that the articles are never discussed in class," whereas personal reading is begun with the certain knowledge that opportunity for discussion is unlikely to arise. We will happily seize it if it does, but that will be an extra delight, a bonus, in contrast to the expectation for students of being able to discuss a text, particularly if it is difficult. That is part of our "work" as students. It is also a public and partially impersonal discussion. For those texts that are more personally chosen, we reveal ourselves only to carefully selected friends and only to the extent that we feel we can trust them with our inner confidences. In both cases, the person talked with matters, as Doug indicated, but there's a distinction between a person who is professionally respected and one who is personally trusted.

So as students we expect help from an expert, that is, a teacher. From the teacher's point of view, how does it look? Ian, without being asked, turned naturally to a discussion of the contacts reading engenders.

> Reading is one way of having contact with people. I might meet someone who has read Blum and want to talk about it, or I read something and say, 'Bob would like to read this one.' But I'm not reading in the first place with a view to helping grad students. However, that's what's beautiful about being a prof, particularly working with grad students. There's someone to talk with. There's a community where we can share ideas. My students challenge me in my reading. It's not that I do all the leading.

The traditional view of the student-teacher relationship by definition almost rules out the prospect of colleagiality. The teacher is the one in control. Yet reading opens up the possibility of student and teacher together examining the world, extending their understanding of it through their working with and discussion of text. When there is in each a genuine interest in learning, the teacher still gives guidance but does not do all the leading, and may sometimes almost be guiding the students in areas with which the teacher is unfamiliar. The teacher's greater experience allow this, but there is for both real exploration of ideas and concepts.

The student-teacher or colleague-colleague distinction blurs if the person who is professionally respected and the one who is personally trusted become one and the same. Therein is the birth of friendship.

Betty illustrates the richness of being able to talk over the reading with the right person. When asked if she wants to talk with someone after reading, she responded:

> Oh definitely. Definitely. Of course, I have my husband to talk to quite a lot. I'll read something and mull it over, and then very often we'll sit in the evening after the children have gone to bed and we've finished what we're going to do for the evening, we'll often sit and talk for an hour or more, discussing the things I've read. He does a lot of the same reading because he's always very interested in what I'm doing and we have done papers together and so on. He has a good background knowledge so that I can discuss these ideas with him. I suppose as much as anything what he often does is nail me down, make me grapple with and come to terms with the ideas I'm trying to convey to him. Sometimes when I start trying to express the ideas, I present them in a very loose fashion, and maybe that's the way they are in my mind. So then he will start questioning and pinning me down, 'What do you mean here? Give me an example.' That helps me clarify my thinking, not only in the things I find difficult but in any of the professional reading that I do. I would say that being able to discuss with someone the ideas that you have got from the text and perhaps having to convey your ideas about the passage to someone else so that they can understand what you have understood makes you come to grips with what you have read.
>
> I don't do that nearly to the same extent with novels, because

> I mostly read them just for a good story. But occasionally there is one I wonder about. When I read Looking for Mr. Goodbar, we discussed whether such things could really happen and why a person would turn out that way and feel they needed to do such things. It depends on my purpose.

Martin sums up:

> Actually I think there's a bit of a paradox there, because reading is on the one hand a very solitary activity best done alone where it's quiet. And yet it's highly social both in my interaction with the text and in the ideas and conversation it generates. Any particular author may refer to others or may trigger remembrance of other books read, or you see real parallels and contradictions. That's all through the books. And then there's the prospect of talking about it afterwards.

Reading is solitary but not lonely. Into the solitude come people and ideas to populate the world of the mind and to encourage conversation with other minds.

Most of the time conversation with the author of a text is impossible. But for a few authors, contemporaries whom we may have chanced to meet, that is another alternative. Discussion of the text is often avoided by novelists and poets who feel that they have presented a complete work of art which must stand on its own. The reader is to get busy on the remaining share of the work, that of reading thoughtfully and making an interpretation. But authors of discursive writing often welcome a discussion and are pleased if a reader has taken their text seriously enough to wish to pursue the ideas. Ian as a reader finds certain advantages in being acquainted with the author.

> I read Dwayne Huebner differently now that I've talked with him and know some of his stories about his life. Now that I read him I can see his face, twitch of the eye or whatever. And then of course when there is something that gets me, I'm in a position to call him and ask about it. I think that relationship may be a very important one, if whatever is being read is to be meaningful.

One theory of text interpretation suggests that the concrete interpretation is that which the author intended and the reader's job is to determine the author's intent (Hirsch, 1967). Those few cases in which the reader knows the author and can ask about intention seem, however, to be the only times in which that approach to interpretation is viable. Otherwise, it is not possible to know the author's intent. We must work with the text given. Knowing the author is the exception which shows us that normally we interpret from text alone. But we are always free to use other texts for comparison and illumination or to discuss with other readers if we can find someone who is interested.

Freire (1972) describes education as cultural action for two opposite purposes: domination and freedom. In education for domination the teacher bestows the gift of knowledge on students who are almost objectified as receptacles. The teacher issues communiques which students receive and repeat. This view clearly establishes the superiority of the teacher and cuts off any possibility of mutuality and sharing. The lessons are in effect monologues which have no gaps and therefore preclude dialogue.

In education for freedom the process involves inquiry and mutual problem solving, hence dialogue and sharing. The dynamic nature of life is acknowledged in the view that reality is unfinished. The logical implication of this stance is that change is possible, hence for those poorly off there is reason for hope. In this latter context, the opportunity is open for dialogue between teacher and student and also amongst students, as each person is free to share in the learning. There is someone with whom to talk over ideas. And more than just someone to talk to, there is the possibility of an interpretive community.

The Interpretive Community

When a small group of people get together, as in a seminar, how is their interpretation of a text different from that made by each individual separately? What do Freire's students in basic literacy learn in a group that they could not learn independently?

When a group is truly coming to grips with ideas and discussing a text thoughtfully, who comprises the group? Is it not people who have some sort of bond that links them? Perhaps they share an active interest in the topic, perhaps they share a profession, perhaps they are personal friends, perhaps members of a particular religious group. Some of these bonds are clearly stronger than others. A group whose members all practice the same profession but who rarely if every meet is a very different thing from a group of close friends who meet regularly over twenty years and participate deeply in each other's lives. So groups vary immensely. And sometimes the word "community" is used loosely to refer to any group that has at least some linkage, no matter how tenuous. When Fish (1980) speaks of "interpretive communities," he seems to be referring to any group that has certain assumptions or premises from which to make text interpretations. This could include, for example, those who, by virtue of their training in a specialized academic discipline generally subscribe to a particular mode of reasoning or accept a particular set of givens that to someone outside the group may not seem given at all. The individual is a product of the community.

> An interpretive strategy is never the result of a purely individual decision, whether by the reader or by the writer (who is also a reader of his own text); it can only be understood as a collective phenomenon, a set of shared conventions within a community of readers, which may, but does not necessarily, include the writer of the text being interpreted. (Suleiman, 1980, p. 20)

The interpretive community determines what is an acceptable strategy and what is accepted as a logical and valid way to proceed. Thus, in Fish's view, readers within a community can disagree on interpretations and discuss or debate them because there is a stability of position within the community, although different communities have different norms and standards. "In other words, there is no single way of reading that is correct or natural, only 'ways of reading' that are extensions of community perspectives." And when he came to accept this position, it "meant that the business of criticism was not (as I had previously thought) to determine a correct way of reading but to determine from which of a number of possible perspectives reading will proceed" (Fish, 1980, p. 16).

In tracing the development of his own thought, Fish reports that he used to hold the text to be absolute, presumably meaning that the text controlled the encounter and determined the "right" interpretation. When he began to reject that position, he had trouble giving the reader the right to participate in the encounter without swinging to the opposite extreme of subjectivism where the reader has full control and any interpretation the reader might make is thereby acceptable. He eventually took the position that the reader "makes" literature or any other writing, but not one reader individually; rather the reader is a member of an interpretive community. And the community interpretation has more validity and verification than that made by any individual. "Thus the act of recognizing literature is not constrained by something in the text, nor does it issue from an independent and arbitrary will; rather, it proceeds from a collective decision as to what will count as literature, a decision that will be in force only so long as a community of readers or believers continues to abide by it" (Fish, 1980, p. 11).

To illustrate how the reader "makes" the text, Fish tells how he wrote on the board a list of names, mainly linguists, whose writings he wanted a university class to read:

Jacobs - Rosenbaum
Levin
Thorne
Hayes
Ohman (?)

Then that class left the room and a second group of students entered. The second course was in seventeenth century English religious poetry. Fish left the list on the board, but told the second class that it was a poem of the sort they had been studying and their job was to interpret it. They did. They said for example that the shape of the poem represented a cross or an altar; that Jacobs was a reference to Jacob's ladder, i.e., an ascent to heaven, but in this case the ascent was via a rose tree (Rosenbaum), which is a symbol for the Virgin Mary; Thorne is an obvious reference to the crown of thorns and suffering; the last line is either "Oh Man" or "Amen"; and the names move from Hebrew to Christian, that is from the old dispensation to the new, with the last name being ambiguous, hence the question mark (which actually represented Fish's uncertainty about the spelling of that name).

These are only examples of the interpretation; Fish reports a much fuller examination of the "poem" (pp. 322-326).

From this little experiment Fish concludes that the students did not see in the example the distinguishing features of a poem and therefore recognize that this was a poem. Rather they recognized a poem and found the distinguishing features. Therefore, "skilled reading is usually thought to be a matter of discerning what is there, but if the example of my students can be generalized, it is a matter of knowing how to produce what can thereafter be said to be there. Interpretation is not the art of construing but the art of constructing. Interpreters do not decode poems; they make them" (p. 327).

This is a reasonable argument for the constructionist view of reading. The trouble is that the students found something that was not there; in fact, they made a fairly major misinterpretation. This was partly a matter of mind-set. The students were well into a course in which they made symbolic interpretations; they simply did what they had been doing every morning. Once we have established a pattern for problem-solving, we tend to carry on with it even when it is no longer appropriate (Kintsch, 1977, p. 429). Also students tend to take the attitude that the instructor is the expert on the course content and accept quite uncritically the instructor's information (Baldwin and Readence, 1979). So when Fish said this was a seventeenth century religious poem, for them it was. Within this whole context, the students were very much "set up" to react as they did.

And there is always the temptation for students and scholars to overinterpret, to strain at profundity, as these students certainly did. When Fish indicates that the students saw the proffered text as a poem and set out to find the features, he unwittingly identifies the problem. That mistaken assumption at the beginning led the students to start making their rather serious misinterpretation. "Skilled reading is usually thought to be a matter of discerning what is there" for some very good reasons. The students would have been well advised to concentrate on discerning what was there, rather than on producing what they thought should be there and what they were expected to find. Fish's example which he appears to be using as support for the constructionist view seems to be instead a rather strong inditement of it. "Understanding is not reconstruction but mediation" (Gadamer, 1976, p. xvi). The students certainly made an interpretation, quite an elaborate and sophisticated one, but they constructed (not even reconstructed) rather than mediating and did not achieve understanding.

Rather than dialoguing with the text, the students dominated it. They decided what they were looking for and proceeded to find it, whether or not the text had that particular force. It was given no opportunity to speak. Fish's view of interpretation, that the reader makes the text, has exactly this difficulty. Having originally given the text the right to a monologue, Fish is now giving that power to readers, provided there is more than one reader. There could hardly be a clearer example of the problem with Fish's position. What seems missing is the recognition that reading requires both a reader and text, with each making a valued contribution. The fact that the students were an interpretive community did not prevent them all from being misled just as one individual might have been. In making interpretations, there are no guarantees.

Nevertheless, the concept of community is an interesting and potentially fruitful one, with possibilities for a much fuller interpretation and a richer understanding than one reader can grasp working alone. Another aspect to a community is that it allows speaking in a kind of shorthand. The members know certain terms, names and concepts which need no defining or explaining within the group. In families or among close friends, a brief expression may serve to recall an anecdote, so that use of the expression causes a burst of laughter which to an outsider would be incomprehensible. Such jargon is often viewed negatively because of its exclusiveness; it makes outsiders to the group feel very left out. But it also has a positive aspect in that it eases communication within the group as a short reference conveys a whole story or complex idea without need for long explanations. In texts also these shorter forms are possible if writer and readers share in a community. Steiner after quoting a passage from Jane Austen speaks to this matter:

> The economy of the passage is all. This economy is the immediate product of a large confidence, of a community of response between Jane Austen and her material and the novelist and her readers. Such community expresses itself in a prose, which is, structurally, a shorthand. The words used by the novelist draw on public energies, on areas of meaning and implication which may be wide but whose reach of admissable reference is determined. (1978, p. 95)

And what if the community is considered more narrowly as a cohesive and enduring group? Perhaps a group of friends, perhaps a group of believers in a common cause, but in any event a group that experiences and enjoys genuine fellowship. Within such a community there is potential for a meeting of minds, for the combined thinking through of a text and its implications, in other words for the making of a more thorough and thoughtfully-done interpretation than that made by one reader alone. For example, if three people who are good friends and good scholars each read a text carefully and then discuss it, the quality of the joint interpretation is likely to be richer than individual efforts. But this is a two-stage process: careful personal textual study, followed by a sharing of interpretations to reach at least partial agreement. If the interpretation of any one reader does not stand up to the scrutiny of the others it has no legitimacy. While different readers bring to a text their personal experience and views and therefore may be impressed by different parts of the text, there must be enough commonality in interpretation to provide a basis for discussion. This does not mean that we should expect unanimity of interpretation. That does not happen with complex text. But it does mean that an interpretation resulting from a thoughtful discussion among careful and concerned readers has much more authenticity than an interpretation made by an individual.

Of course, many texts do not merit this sort of time and close reading. The text must be viewed as very significant personally or professionally for it to bear careful re-reading and study. Hence, it is not surprising that much of the writing on how to study and interpret texts came originally from theology and dealt specifically with interpreting the Bible, although the field has now broadened considerably and includes other texts as well.

Such attention is usually confined to those texts which we expect may make a major impact on our lives. The Bible in particular supports this view of shared interpretation-making with the community of believers. "No man can interpret any prophecy of Scripture by himself." The quest for truth is important, but if carried on singlehandedly is apt to contain many detours, some of which the community working together can avoid.

Ricoeur speaks of text interpretations as being, not a matter of finding the right answer since there is no right answer and no way of recognizing it beyond all doubt if it were somehow found, but rather of finding a probable interpretation. And not only a probable one, but the most probable. This concept of "most probable" is crucial, since it both recognizes the inevitability of there being more than one interpretation and at the same time guards against the acceptance of any or all positions the reader may happen to take. These two opposite difficulties give considerable trouble in text interpretation in that it is easy for the reader to fall into one or the other. If the concern is to protect the authority and purity of the text, then it is easy to start thinking of a right interpretation, one meaning, perhaps the one the author had in mind. So the reader-text dialogue is disturbed by the dominance of the text over the reader. This is an illusion, certainly, since to hold that the text has one meaning and therefore one right interpretation is to put the text in shackles and restrict it to one segment of its full potential. An interesting paradox arises whereby a reader who claims that the text has only one meaning appears to give full authority to the text, but in that proclamation has actually just usurped complete power. For, of course, the one possible meaning is that which is held by the reader making the declaration. The text is no longer a voice, but has simply become a tool for gaining personal status. But it's possible for both reader and followers to be deceived by the illusion that they have granted textual authority. When the dialogue is broken, one partner becomes subservient and distortion is inevitable.

On the other hand, if the interpreter focuses too heavily on the reader and the reader's contribution to the interpretation, it is easy to arrive at a position where any interpretation goes, where all interpretations are equally acceptable no matter how well- or ill-thought through, and where there are no criteria for distinguishing poorer from better insights. Carried to its ultimate extreme, the reader simply makes up a text, ignoring what is given, and "reads" whatever is desired. Hence, the value of the concept of the most probable interpretation. It necessitates that the reader dialogue with the text and perhaps with other readers. It may require re-reading and refinement of ideas. It certainly needs clear and careful thought. And it recognizes the difference among readers. Each reader is challenged to make the most probable interpretation possible (i.e., each of us must do the best we can) if reading alone. If another reader comes along with greater insight, or if two or more readers in discussion forge a better interpretation, that takes precedence as "most probable."

> If it is true that there is always more than one way of construing a text, it is not true that all interpretations are equal. The text presents a limited field of possible constructions. The logic of validation allows us to move between the two limits of dogmatism and scepticism. It is always possible to argue for or against an interpretation, to confront interpretations, to arbitrate between them and to seek agreement, even if this agreement remains beyond our immediate reach. (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 79)

To avoid the Scylla and Charybdis of dogmatism and scepticism in making an interpretation is already a significant advantage. The argument to determine the most probable interpretation can happen within the reader's mind, but is much more easily done in discussion with another thoughtful reader. And the warning that the argument may take awhile is useful for the struggling community. There is also an important caution for teachers implicit in this understanding. It is common practice to tell students that their answers are either right or wrong, as the teacher decrees. Students need to learn, not so much to seek a right answer, as to understand that an interpretation can be more or less appropriate, suitable for one context but not another, more or less logical, slightly different from one reader to another and more or less probable. And interpretation is not an absolute, even though students' answers are often expected to match the teacher's interpretation.

Ricoeur refers to the "most probable" view of interpretation as a "logic of probability" (1976, p. 78), an expressive term which suggests the use of logic, reason, intuitive understanding, any resources available to work toward the most probable interpretation. And a major resource available is the community with its potential for comparison of ideas, stimulation of new ideas, checks on illogical implications or misreadings, presentation of alternate ways of moving into the gaps in the text, awareness of ambiguities and of inferences made, awareness of other texts related to the one under study—in short, putting on the table more than one mind could think of and striving for some consensus and a logic of probability amongst all the possibilities.

Thus, the community becomes a living hermeneutic circle in which we circle ever closer to the truth. The circle, to be sure, is not completely smooth and round. As the community discusses, the talk is sometimes stuck on a point and a bulge develops, sometimes it goes off topic on a tangent, sometimes there is disagreement intense enough to make a little break. But if the fellowship is caring and vital, the circle, however imperfect, continues, "following the movement of the text from sense to reference: from what it says to what it talks about" (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 87) and thereby gaining understanding.

Hermeneutic Circle

When there is a text with its circle of knowledge and understanding and there is me with my circle of knowledge and understanding, how do I go about seeing to what extent the two overlap, or making them overlap to a greater extent so that I can interpret the text?

Doug describes his struggle with a text he found difficult but wanted to understand.

> I did a couple of things. One was re-read. I analyzed the structure of the text; I'd think, what's the main point here. I was able to tell at times what was important and what was not because of the structure. Some things seemed to be items that comprised a sub-heading. There were lots of sub-headings which really helped me. I'd go back to check the heading and that helped me make sense of it. At times when I got bogged down, I'd just keep going and see if something that came later would help, or maybe would tell me if that point was important in the first place. I also tried to think of examples and see if they fit the concepts.

Doug indicates that he looked for main ideas and headings as a way of organizing and relaying the details, but he also used the accumulating details to figure out the larger concepts. It would be incomplete to say that he worked only from larger units to smaller or from smaller to larger, since in fact he did both, pretty much at once, in a constant back and forth process using each to explore the other.

Can one incident in a story be interpreted fully apart from the whole story in which it stands? Would omission of the incident matter to the story? Macbeth's complaint near the end of his life that his life is "fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf" is the sort of statement that might be made by anyone who feels the onset of the "autumn of life," but within the context of the play it has quite another emphasis since Macbeth is not an elderly man and his life is not fading peacefully toward its quiet years. The whole play influences the interpretation of that part and the part contributes to the whole character and story of Macbeth.

In the musical Evita (lyrics by Tim Rice) dealing with the life of Eva Peron, there is a scene in which Eva, wanting to form an alliance with Juan Peron, throws his former mistress out into the street at night. The evicted girl, young and vulnerable, asks herself, "What happens now? Where am I going to?" Much later in the story, the hard indomitable Eva now weak and dying of cancer ironically repeats the refrain, "What happens now? Where am I going to?" Not only do the lines change meaning in the two situations (the whole affecting the part) but in each case the lines have particular poignance and affect our view of the women (the part affecting the whole).

To say that in text interpretation we need to know the whole in order to understand the parts, but we need to know the parts in order to understand the whole may sound like a contradiction, but is only what readers experience to be so. How then is progress made? As Doug's description suggests, there is a continuous circling. But the circle is not vicious. With each circle we understand a few more details which leads to a fuller understanding of the main ideas which then allows us to see more clearly how the details link together and so on. By going in circles we build a richer and more truthful interpretation.

We might now reconsider the incident discussed earlier in which Fish (1980) had his students read a list of names as a seventeenth century religious poem. Fish himself in describing what happened says that his students did not see in this text the distinguishing features of a poem and therefore recognize a poem; rather they began by recognizing a poem and consequently "found" the features they were looking for. In other words, the circle did not form. The students went only linearly from the notion of whole poem to parts. Further, the "whole" with which they began was not a main or underlying idea being presented but rather the very vague notion of these words as poem—a notion that they were given and that was, in itself, misinformation. Interpretive progress is made around the part/whole circle.

But the circle has other dimensions. "For the interpreter to 'perform' the text, he must 'understand' it: he must preunderstand the subject and the situation before he can enter the horizon of its meaning. Only when he can step into the magic circle of its horizon can the interpreter understand its meaning. This is that mysterious 'hermeneutic circle' without which the meaning of the text cannot emerge" (Palmer, 1969, p. 25). If I am to read The Discovery of Grounded Theory or the hockey scores and statistics and be able to make sense of them, then I need to have some knowledge of theory building or of hockey. In other words the circle of the text's knowledge and the circle of the reader's knowledge must be partially overlapping if there is to be any dialogue. The more that is shared, the less must be explained. If the two circles do not touch at all, nothing is shared, since there is no common language in which to speak; but if the circles are completely overlapping and matching and the reader already knows what the text has to offer, the reading is entirely redundant. So a partial overlap is desirable. But how does the reader gain this knowledge? Is it not by reading? Here is another hermeneutic circle. We need some prior knowledge of the subject in order to gain information from the text, but a major way in which we get the knowledge is by reading text. Again, we circle toward understanding. Each bit of knowledge gained becomes part of our prior knowledge which enables us to interpret more fully the ongoing text which adds to our prior knowledge which enables. . . . This illustrates why it is sometimes an advantage or even a necessity to read a text more than once, since we may on additional readings be able to grasp implications missed the first time when we lacked certain knowledge. It also shows that our vantage point is a wandering one, constantly changing, as the views and insights we bring into the encounter with the text are never fixed, but dynamic. "In the literary arts, as in the other arts, there is a magical interaction between the use of the qualitative past and the power of the expressive form itself to engender a particular quality of experience" (Eisner, 1976, p. 7). That particular quality once experienced enriches our prior knowledge and increases the potential quality of the on-going experience. In that sense, reading is cumulative throughout a lifetime.

Cathy points toward a third variation of the circle.

> I tend to want to make sense of things. I really do. If there is symbolism and metaphor, I like to impose my meaning on that and then if I have to change it, I can. I'm fairly flexible that way. One time I was taking a course on Latin America and I couldn't understand why they were always having revolutions. There were so many, little ones and big ones. I guess I just didn't understand the structure of the society very well. It was a coincidence that I was reading Joseph Conrad's Nostromo for an English course at the same time that I was doing this Latin American course. In doing an assignment on Nostromo I re-read several chapters a number of times and gradually closed in on the meaning of the symbolism. Writing about it helped me interpret the symbolism too. I adjusted my views and interpretation as I worked at it.

Martin describes a similar procedure.

> Usually I make a tentative interpretation about the setting and situation and look for details to confirm it as I go. I tend to start off with a general impression and gradually narrow down and sharpen the interpretation as I get more information, like realizing almost immediately that a story is set in a place that has harsh winters and then gradually using other details to narrow it down to Greenland. But every once in a while I get fooled. Before I began Thorn Birds I'd heard that it was an interesting Australian story so I thought I knew the setting. But when I began reading, it seemed to be set in New Zealand and I thought I was misreading somehow. There were a couple of paragraphs with pertinent details that I read several times before I concluded that it really was New Zealand and I'd picked up a wrong impression from people. What actually happens, of course, is that the story starts in New Zealand but soon moves to Australia.

Martin and Cathy both show that they propose an interpretation and confirm or disconfirm it as the reading goes on, a process Ricoeur terms "guess and validation." The guess originally provides a starting place, a way to get involved with the text, but it must be tried out, refined, made more precise, validated again and constantly clarified. What is not possible is to refrain from some sort of trial view, whether it is initially very tentative or more assured. The guess must be hazarded in order to be confirmed, refined, altered or replaced. The easier the reader finds the dialogue, the more likely it is that an early guess will be validated. The paraphrase of the text which the reader makes is not merely a literal rendering of the text (or it would not be a paraphrase), but a merging of the reader's past with the text's expression. In the progression of guess and validation there is a further circling toward understanding.

Another form of the circle has to do with meaning and interpretation. We need to know the meaning of a text in order to make an interpretation of it, but it is in the making of an interpretation that we determine the meaning. "The reading of expression requires an expressive reading" (Sardello, 1975, p. 274). Reading without expression is not reading, there must be expressiveness in the reading; yet expression is the result of reading. In Ian's words: "When is it that we are giving meaning to what we read? There is a constant circling back. I'm reading, I've read, I'm reading." And in that process, expressiveness grows.

In all its forms the circle is more of a spiral, enabling us to move gradually closer to a fuller understanding and toward the most probable interpretation. Whether the process is ever complete remains a question. Detweiler holds the rather pessimistic position that ". . . all interpretations are only approximations of a text that never coincide with the text's full meaning" (1978, p. 2). With quite simple texts this may be debatable. But for those of complexity, the multiple thoughtful interpretations testify to the approximation. Only the most probable interpretation. That is close enough.

And finally, the hermeneutic circle can have a human form. Within the fellowship of the community, the circle becomes intersubjectivity, concern of the members for each other, and shared interpretation-making. The thoughtful talk within the circle of the fellowship is another way to move toward richer understanding. Any one interpreter should not be surprised or upset if the community questions and alters an interpretation offered, since no one can lay claim to complete truth. The discerning community works at and works out its interpretations. In this sense, text interpretation has more to do with personal relationships than with regulations and techniques. Hermeneutics involves both dynamic understanding and understanding the dynamics of text and situation.

If the words of the text are taken seriously, believed and lived out by the community, as in the case of religious text, then the word becomes flesh through the lives of the members. The letter of the law and teachings becomes a living letter, that is, the letter becomes spirit.

And for teachers there is another implication. A teacher must first be a student, an interpreter of text, a participant who learns within the scholarly community and grows in understanding. It is from that base of understanding that teachers derive the authority to teach. This authority implies understanding of both text and student;

the teacher has a knowledge and experience base from which to start, but more importantly remembers what it is like to be constantly engaged in these activities and hence attempts to draw the student into them as well. Genuine authority to teach does not stem from a degree conferred by a university or a license granted by a governmental body, that is not from the office held, but from personal qualifications. The teacher is for the student, an example (model) of a student, a kind of living text who guides the student into text interpretation, into what it's like to read. The teacher serves first as a bridge between student and text, entering into the student's dialogue with the text and serving as a translator between them when the student finds it difficult to sustain the dialogue. For example, when a student finds the text too compact or too demanding, the teacher can talk with the student before, during or after the reading, can read along with the student, can ask questions which guide the student toward the trend of the text's line of reasoning, or can provide activities that stimulate insights into the text. The teacher needs to participate in the dialogue between student and text whenever it is in danger of breaking down, but as much as possible let it continue independently. As the child learns, the teacher must step back quietly, while also remaining available to form with student and text a three-point hermeneutic circle.

The Circle

No hard unyielding core
But a web, invitingly meshed
    With spaces designed for crawling into
    Like children fitting small bodies into the rings of the
        playground
    Heads poked up through, laughing, enjoying
Welcome, all ye who enter here

No easy lead to follow, this text
    Exciting, interesting, confusing, implying
    What now? What means?
Student to teacher, friend to friend, shoulder to shoulder
Try it out, try it on, talk
Resolve, refine, reflect

No necessary isolation here
    In private pools of self
Join the circle, whole or faulty
    Learn and teach, adapt
Test, correct the compass course
    At ease within the fellowship

Circle, spiral in and up
    Whole and part and whole
    Paradox to paradox
Letter to spirit, text to life
    Shifting vantage point of learning
Circling onward

Chapter IV

RE-READING

What is it like to re-read? Having had one conversation with the text, why should I seek to return for another? On the other hand, why not? When a human voice speaks to me and I appreciate the conversation, value the friendship, I don't want to limit myself to one conversation only. But I don't want to have the same conversation over endlessly either. A friend will make different comments in the next conversation, whereas a text . . .? When I return to a text, does it give the same responses each time, or do they change? What is the nature of this ongoing conversation? Why do I sometimes choose to read a text more than once?

Continuing Influence

Jeff notes that he likes to re-read, "to see an insight or a perplexity in the end and then read again to check it out. Sometimes it isn't until the end of a book that I realize that there is another dimension to the book that I haven't really picked up until then." This recognition of another dimension seems to happen particularly in novels which can be read just as a story or can be read as allegory. Is Huckleberry Finn a rolicking tale of a boy having adventures on the Mississippi in another century, or is this a passage toward maturity on the river of life? If I am near the end before the second possibility occurs to me, a re-reading can be a most illuminating way of exploring the possibility. I truly read another story the second time because of that changed perspective. I hold a different and more thoughtful conversation with the text.

Nancy has found that certain texts bring a sense of stability and reason to her, a cool tranquility in the heat of the daily pace. "One thing I read and re-read very consistently is Marcus Aurelius. He has this sheer, logical commonsense way of saying things: this is what life is about, so accept it, take each day unto itself. Sometimes I read it very quickly and other times very slowly so that I can reflect upon it." For Nancy, who is subject to swings of mood, this cool, lucid prose has a calming and leveling effect that sustains her.

She also uses re-reading to merge past and present time and unify her life. Her first-hand experience of war is now behind her, but "there are certain times, dates in my career and life when I go back and read war poetry. I'm in danger of forgetting. And although I don't want to bear the sorrow again, I also don't want to forget. There is a sense of renewal. It helps me get things back in perspective, but it's also an awareness that this was part of life, part of what made me." Living out a busy, daily round in a fragmented society, we find it easy to feel ourselves separated into bits, our attention and energy divided many ways. Integration is welcome, and one way it comes is through a return to the familiar, a marrying of our past and present experience.

Or in a slightly different way, it can be a convergence of ideals and experience, a return to potentialities I do not wish to lose sight of. Martin notes the value of these personal reminders of desirable ways of being in the world:

> I re-read novels that either express or illuminate my own feelings about and experience with the world, or that reveal potential and desirable ways of being and relating. You know, mysteries or romances can be fun to flip through, but they're just empty-headed fun; that's o.k. but there's no reason to go back to them. And some books are depressing because of their depraved picture of human beings. When you finish _The Carpetbaggers_ you feel as if you've slipped and fallen into a sewer. But some books are ennobling. They show real people, very human with all their failings, but yet admirable. In _Cry, the Beloved Country_ there is so much evil and misery, but it's a redeeming book because of the dignity and patience of that frail, humble father and because in all the sordid reality there is a bit of hope, an outside chance that people could be more humane. When you re-read that book you are impressed again by the dignity of the human spirit and reminded of what can be.

Nancy talked of experience as "part of what made" her, and Martin is here pointing up that what we read also becomes part of us, especially what we choose to re-read. On the first reading we do not always know just what we are getting into, but in re-reading we are welcoming back a text, inviting it to speak to us again. And what we welcome not only comments on our personal values, but influences and shapes them.

Levels of Interpretation

But the re-reading is more than an integration of the past or a renewal of purpose and intent in life. It can be a way of moving us forward, of deepening our understanding, as Jeff illustrates.

> I guess I've read _One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest_ about twenty times. I use it in my course, so each year I read it again, whether I want to or not. And each time I see new things in it, and talk it over with different people. Probably in the last fifteen years, I've talked it over in detail with 500 people. I had read it several times before it suddenly occurred to me that the book is _loaded_ with Christian religious symbolism, just shot all the way through. Everybody in _One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest_ is right out of the gospels. Realizing that gave me a fresh insight into the relevance of the Christian story to twentieth century living. I saw that the events of the gospels

> are lived out at all times and in all places, or at least can be. The potential is there.
>
> I think the story was written completely at two levels. The one level, that of the day by day living of Randall McMurphy and the other cuckoos in the mental hospital, that story was complete in and of itself. It was interesting, it was funny, it was a wonderful slice of life in a special and ultimately tragic set of circumstances. But part of the genius of the whole book was that without it being intrusive and without detracting at all from the lives and events, Kesey cast another whole and more profound perspective on these things. For me it was a very profound, almost a religious, experience. And this message in the book is so subtle. It's just there for those who want to see it.

Not many books, of course, will have this large an impact on our lives and understanding. But it's quite common for people to mention a book that substantially altered their thinking, and even their living. ("Education for Critical Consciousness changed me. I don't know when I've read a book like it." "Richard Hilary's The Last Enemy is such a powerful picture of young men caught in the middle of a war and gradually making sense of pacifism that I had to sit right down and read it again.") Sometimes the impact comes on first reading, but often it builds through repeated readings. When the voice of the text is so powerful that it first "catches" and "holds" our attention, then the dialogue is enthusiastically pursued, and in that extended conversation ideas are tossed about and explored. So an insight may seem to have hatched suddenly, but it has certainly had its incubation period.

But indeed the more subtle level is "just there for those who want to see it." How many people have read One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest and not seen it? Who has seen it eventually but not at first? Seen and rejected it? Seen after a discussion with a friend? Nancy thinks she usually sees three levels in the text, beginning with the "surface level at which the story is just enjoyed as a story as you go along." It's pleasant to stop and day-dream, or to become absorbed in fast action and read at a gallop. Just ride the waves of the story. Then there is a second level in which "the text is seen in its totality." The rethinking of relationships and events that is invited by the ending of a novel is done. The "freezing into the single, simultaneous unity" of which Frye (1969) speaks occurs. In Jeff's words, "the story is complete in and of itself." Nancy's third level is "the seeing of the fuller implications. Some people never get to that level." The links are made between the world of the book and my world. I am seeing beyond what is said to what is meant. Although the circumstances described in The Scent of Water are so very different than mine, why does the world seem familiar? Why does Mary seem so exactly the sort of friend I would like to be? What is the authentic, perhaps universal, human experience reflected here? Sometimes I do not reach this level. The conversation has become too one-sided. Either I am doing all the work, or the text is saying too much without giving me a chance to respond. Perhaps the conversation has become too obscure. Sometimes there is no shared world. I just do not understand. Or I'm too tired. Surface level only. But if in my text conversation I reach this deeper level, it is very satisfying; this move toward integration and unity is prized.

The text also has implicit within it certain levels. Jean-Paul Sartre, when seventy years old and no longer able, because of virtual blindness, to do the writing which had occupied his working life, spoke from the perspective of the writer to the difference between writing philosophy and writing novels.

> What distinguishes literature from scientific communication, for example, is that literature is ambiguous. The artist of language arranges words in such a way that, depending on how he emphasizes them or gives weight to them, they will have one meaning, and another, and yet another, each time at different levels. . . .
>
> In philosophy, every sentence should have only one meaning. The work I did on The Words, for example, where I attempted to give multiple and superimposed meanings to each sentence, would be bad work in philosophy. If I have to explain the concepts of 'for-itself' and 'in-itself', that can be difficult. I can use different comparisons, different demonstrations, to make it clear, but I must deal with ideas that are self-contained. It is not on this level that the complete meaning is found, because the complete meaning can and must be multiple as far as the complete work is concerned. I do not actually mean to say that philosophy, like scientific communication, is unambiguous.
>
> . . . generally speaking it is always more difficult to write, say, four sentences in one, as in literature, than one in one, as in philosophy. A sentence like 'I think therefore I am,' can have infinite repercussions in all directions, but as a sentence it possess the meaning that Descartes gave it. While when Stendhal writes, 'As long as he could see the clock tower of Verrieres, Julien kept turning around,' the sentence, by simply saying what the character does, also tells us what Julien feels, what Mme de Renal feels, and so on. (1977, pp. 7-8)

If Sartre is correct about these differences in ambiguity and levels of meaning, then obviously we as readers must adjust our expectations to suit the type of text. In reading philosophy we have in essence only one level on which to find the meaning and we must therefore be precise in striving for that level. In reading narrative, on the other hand, we have several possibilities and may interpret the text at the level that is clearest or most important to us at the moment of reading. Thus as Sartre indicates, Julien's actions may be read as plot, as character revelation, or as relationship between characters. This makes the reading of narrative an easier task than that of philosophy. Further, in re-reading a narrative we may choose a quite different level and see meanings in the text not apparent to us earlier. As Jeff commented, one can see or ignore the allegorical aspects—if one is able.

Ingarden also discusses these alternatives, although he does not call them "levels." Using the sentence, "Lord Wolodyjowski defeated Bohun in single combat," he points out that the reader can focus where desired: on the victor, the vanquished, or the type of fight. This focus is more than just attention, since Ingarden indicates that it "significantly surpasses the cognition taking place in an ordinary reading" and occurs during a pause or after the reading. And he stresses that it is different in different readings of the same text (1973, p. 45). The point appears similar to Sartre's view of different levels on different readings.

Much depends on the thoughtfulness of the reader, and the willingness to make reinterpretations. "The writer only initiates the process; then the re-reader carries on from there" (Joos, 1961, p. 42). In Joos' view, the writer rewrites, packing more and more layers of meaning into the text. Re-reading makes these available to the reader. "The re-reader is a creative thinker. He is thoroughly justified in feeling that he has created a half-dozen meanings in reconsidering a text too short to hold them all on its surface" (p. 45). For the re-reader to be exploring beyond the surface level is certainly desirable and consistent with what Sartre suggests the writer hopes for. But can the re-reader go beyond the writer's intent? How far? Did Kesey intend to write One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest as a

Christian allegory? Did he know that dimension was there? Does his intention matter to the reader? If a thoughtful reader can see that layer of the story and so read it, without distorting the story or doing an injustice to the tale of Randall McMurphy and associates, then Kesey's voice is speaking on that level also, no matter what he had in mind. In this encounter, two intelligences are at work. Why should it be surprising if together they create ideas that neither would have had alone? Book titles often sugest that exactly this event has occurred with the writer as a reader. Who Has Seen the Wind, The Sound and the Fury, For Whom the Bell Tolls are evidence that their authors were first readers who encountered a poetic text and reshaped an idea they found there. But the text does impose limits. Is The Day of the Jackal really about political philosophies? No, but Animal Farm is. The text designates a topic and discusses it, inviting the re-reader to move more deeply into the topic developing the trend of the dialogue, but forbidding wild extrapolation to irrelevancies. In the 1960's, there were some self-styled literary critics who construed every book and poem as being "really about" sex or death, and held further that the former was really about the latter. The reader is not free to monopolize the conversation.

In re-reading discursive writing, I may be merely seeking to refresh my memory. But usually I am asking the text for a second chance at relieving my uncertain interpretation. "I didn't quite get that" indicates an awareness that there is something more there that I didn't quite understand, another level to be considered. Or I may ask of the text, "Is this what you mean?" thereby trying out an interpretation to see how the text reacts to it. This search seems to be particularly necessary with more abstract writing. For Nancy, "Philosophy is difficult. I read it once to get an overview, see the broad outlines, and then two or three times to follow the argument closely." By moving through various layers of understanding, the reader eventually arrives at Sartre's one-meaning-level. If there is only one level, it is not a shallow one and must be worked at. Usually this requires more than one reading. Cathy describes how she moves from uncertainty forward:

> OK take something I enjoy, Frank Smith. The first time I read him I was really slogging through it; the way that he says it is very difficult to read. Sort of sentence by sentence. But I guess it was partly because his ideas confronted my framework, although I could see that a lot of what he said was making sense. So then I re-read his work, parts of it, not cover to cover unless I'm slogging through it and need that much structure. As I re-read parts, it became more familiar to me and I could accept a lot of what he was saying. It became much more like a conversation where he would be saying things and I would almost be writing in the margins, questions and so on. I was responding to what he was saying. I think that happens to me quite frequently when reading information prose, particularly if it's something I'm interested in and have chosen to read because I feel the need to learn, there's something I want to know. If I don't understand something initially, I do tend to keep reading, rather than to go back. If that doesn't help, then I'll flip back a few pages and try again.

From doubt and difficulty to dialogue. When the reading is difficult enough, Cathy is reduced to going sentence by sentence, a process she aptly terms "slogging." A reader in this phase is unable to sense the flow and direction of the text and hence is unable to move with it or see along the line of the argument. In such a state, not very sure what the text is doing, the reader cannot really dialogue with the text, but is reduced to an occasional question, which often enough is a request for a repetition. But Cathy shows that phase giving way to genuine dialogue. With persistence, she becomes able to respond, question, challenge, join in. And in spite of the re-reading and effort needed before being able to dialogue, Cathy began by choosing this text as an example of reading she enjoys. In this case the dialogue has been well worth the struggle. A more insightful level has been reached.

Gibson (1975) holds that readers read for the least amount of information compatible with the task, so that when the task changes a re-reading becomes necessary, a view verified by Ken.

> Although I may have read something today, I read it a year from now and my purpose may have changed so that I read it entirely differently. I have a really good article dealing with research design. I read it a while ago and didn't get that much out of it, but now that I'm more familiar with a variety of research methods and I'm actually using one, it will be much more meaningful. That's one reason why I try to photocopy everything.

As discussed earlier, the reader chooses the focus. And in discursive writing particularly, that focus is shaped by the purpose for the reading. When the purpose changes, the reader has a different focus, and may well wish to re-read. All purposes cannot be met on one reading. I commonly read the first time for a broad overview of what the author is saying. This gives an indication of the direction in which the author is moving and enables me to start thinking along with the author. In addition, I always have a definite purpose for reading a particular text. This purpose governs the aspect of the text to which I attend and it colours my interpretations. If my purpose changes, then another reading becomes necessary using the new stance.

A reader first approaching a text and learning the topic to be discussed must be open to all the possible ways that topic could be explored. This open-endedness is vital in the beginning so that the reader is receptive to whatever development the text is pursuing. As I read, I try to follow the logic of the argument as presented, and gradually I become more certain that I am indeed walking in the text's path. I am aware, however, that if I decide too quickly that I have understood, I may very well deceive myself and misread the text. When I first think that I have grasped the idea under discussion, I must remain tentative. There is an important stage of: "Well, I think the text is about this, but I'm not sure yet." As I continue to read, I gradually decide that I was right or wrong or that I was basically right but I need to make some refinements in my interpretation. Sometimes tentativeness may last through the entire reading of a text, necessitating a re-reading.

As the readers quoted above have indicated, additional readings enable us to reflect more fully on the ideas presented. An interaction can then occur between reader and text with the reader making mental comments on the writing. How frequently I "talk back" as I read: "That's good; I hadn't thought of that," or, "I wonder; I'm not so sure about that," or "I disagree; you're ignoring the fact that . . ." This response can happen in the first reading, but occurs more readily in re-reading when I have had some thinking time. Thus, the re-reading becomes at the same time both easier and harder than the first reading. It is easier in the sense that I am already familiar with the text and know its force and direction; but it is harder in that I am now synthesizing, selecting and evaluating. To move on to another level is a challenging activity, but important in interpretation.

"Interpretation is the work of thought which consists in deciphering the hidden meaning in the apparent meaning, in unfolding the levels of meaning implied in the literal meaning" (Ricoeur, 1974, p. 13).

Sometimes the re-reading is just a pleasure. Several grade one students indicated that it's fun to re-read a book because "it's easy. You know all the words. You first learn how to read the book and after that it's easy." For beginners who are still struggling to decode print this is an important factor. After learning to recognize the words and thus doing the work, they are free to enjoy the story. In this instance, the surface level is laborious in a way that would not be so for adults, but worth it for the pleasure that follows at deeper levels. The children's words also show why they want to repeat the same story so many times.

Another reason was given by Gina, a bright-eyed little girl in grade one, commenting on why she would rather read a story herself than have it read to her by an adult. "Adults go too fast. You don't get a chance to listen. I say, 'Read me a story,' and they say, 'I already did.'" As Gina makes clear, children need "a chance to listen" to all the aspects and implications that interest them in the story. Gina, like every other interested reader, is striving for a deeper level of understanding. And again, like other readers, she wants to control the rate and repetition of the reading, so that she can involve herself in the reading encounter.

And when a paragraph or section is particularly appealing, that is another sort of pleasure the text gives. "In some cases, when I really like a passage, I'll read it several times before going on.

I read my favorite books again about every two years, and when I read them again, I read continuously from beginning to end" (David Pettijohn cited by Gibson and Levin, 1975, p. 454). The re-reading may be instant or delayed, regular or more happenstance in its appeal.

Heather also re-reads for the pleasure of it.

> I didn't used to re-read, but now that I'm getting older I find there's more value in it. I used to feel that there were so many books I'd like to read and only so much time and I can't get around to them all, so I'll read as many as I can, rather than re-read. But now I've discovered that when you go back to a book it comes to you with a new freshness and it's really more meaningful. I see much more value in it now. Also it has to do with the kind of reading I'm doing now. Books with political allusions and so forth you want to re-read. A poem you re-read. You want to sort of know it partly by memory. Important writings need to be re-read. And somehow when you go back to a text it's highlighted slightly differently for you and by you.

When a text is appealing, there is the joy of not merely being casually acquainted with it but of getting to know it much more intimately—"partly by memory." It lives on in the mind and comes to be understood in a variety of circumstances and hence with more than one focus.

Another way of seeking a different level is to attend to a different aspect of the text than on first reading. "When I know the plot I can concentrate on the style, the subtleties or the tangents missed before. Sometimes that leads to a re-interpretation of the characters or the story." Betty is conscious of shifting her attention in a very similar way to that in which Sartre suggests writers embed levels. Pat, although speaking of quite a different sort of text, also describes a shift of her attention to encounter the text in a different way, from a different stance, than on first reading: "George Bernard Shaw's words are so clever. I re-read him to see the way he uses words to get his ideas across. I like to read Bertrand Russell over again because it just fascinates me that anybody could think so clearly. He captures ideas in a few lines so that they seem deceptively simple."

Eisner has suggested that "to recognize the strategies writers employ requires that one rise above the content in order to see, not simply what the author is saying, but what the author is doing as he structures his expression" (1976, p. 8). To see only the "saying" without the "doing" or vice versa is to remain a naive reader at a surface level. For some readers, or with some texts, this may be satisfactory. The conversation has not become engaging enough, either because of lack of commitment or ability on the reader's part or lack of profundity on the text's, to be considered in depth. But otherwise readers are dissatisfied with the dichotomy Eisner mentions and seek a more integrated interpretation. In this search, the reader has an advantage over the listener in that the written text is usually more carefully constructed and more edited than spoken language. Also the reader is assured of being presented with the same words in the same order, whereas speakers when asked to repeat frequently rephrase the sentence. The advantage for the reader is that any connectives or relationships specified by the text but missed in the first reading are still there for clarification. Such factors can make a very significant difference to the meaning. If a reader reads "and" between two ideas that are actually connected by "but," the interpretation will be affected. In such a case the reader will often discover that something "doesn't make sense here" and will go back to sort out the problem. Listeners cannot be assured of this stability. However, the re-phrasing which the listener is likely to receive can sometimes be an aid to understanding, an aid not available to a struggling reader.

It has been suggested that a distinction can be made between reading in a natural (unreflective) attitude and reading in a reflective (theoretic) attitude. This appears to be a false dichotomy. Not only are there other ways of reflecting besides theorizing, but it is impossible to say where reflection begins or ends. Is it even possible to read without any reflection at all? It is certainly possible to race along in a text to find out what happens. But even then some feature of the story may appeal or be off-putting (e.g., the plot may seem very contrived, or the characters shallow). We may choose to keep reading anyway, but that does not mean we are unreflective. Or we may spend an evening seeking pure and simple entertainment in an escapist book or movie and wake up the next morning with a head full of criticisms, literary or otherwise. In what reading experience are we totally unreflective? Much (all?) reading is richer, more illuminating, even more entertaining, if we are thoughtful about it. To dialogue with text requires thoughtfulness and reflection. This issue has significant implications for teaching and curriculum. If thoughtful (critical) reading is not "natural" for mature readers, if the natural attitude is unreflective, then schools are failing badly in a significant aspect of the curriculum and students are leaving school gullible and susceptible. To read with understanding is to be in some degree reflective.

The Text Interprets Itself

"Re-reading is not re-scanning the print. Re-scanning is the least profitable substitute for re-reading, and is best reserved for official documents. Re-reading is reconsidering the text. It is best done with the eyes closed. It can be done thousands of miles and thousands of days distant from the printed page" (Joos, 1961, p. 41). In this sense, re-reading is a continuation of the first reading, a logical extension of the thinking about the text. And while the thinking can certainly be done in the absence of the text, it's usually easier with it. The reconsideration tends to lead to a re-reading. Often I need to check just exactly what is there, what I think I remember, especially if I am really reconsidering it. Ken notes, "After I've thought about something for awhile, I re-read it for alternative thinking. I may change my mind and interpret it quite differently." The word "may" in the previous sentence is important. The re-reading may show the text responding to the new interpretation or rejecting it as quite incongruent. But the willingness of the reader to rethink and re-examine ideas is vital to sustaining the conversation. Closed minds permit no entry.

When shared communication occurs between text and reader, the re-reading is like another conversation with a friend, pursuing a wish to become better acquainted with the thought of the text. Re-reading then, is not a repeated conversation, but a new one. If in reading Watership Down I share with Hazel the responsibility he carries for the safety of the community, then I have changed. And so in re-reading a text I am a slightly different person than I was in the first reading. This is so even if the second reading occurs directly after the first, since the first reading has already altered me. If the two readings are more widely separated in time, my intervening experiences will have made even more difference in me. Thus each reading is somewhat different because the text is read by a person who brings new meaning to it.

Not only the reader, but also the text must be willing to allow for this reconsideration. The second reading "often produces a different impression from the first." The change may be in the reader's circumstances, but "the text must be such as to allow the variation. On a second reading familiar occurrences now tend to appear in a new light and seem to be at times corrected, at times enriched" (Iser, 1974, p. 280).

The new meaning gained from the first reading becomes part of the experiential background which I bring to the second reading and is available to use in the new interpretation. Thus the text is used to interpret itself; it becomes its own interpreter.

"A second reading is a quite different experience from the first. There are less mystification, groping and tension and far more reverberation and illumination as one brings to bear on earlier sections information and awareness gleaned from later ones. And with each successive reading, of course, this process continues until it seems not too much to say that the form and structure have been radically transformed. The very same structures which had served to fragment experience now serve to pull it together" (Slatoff, 1970, p. 20).

Heap (1977) in considering this constant change, wonders how we achieve object constancy of texts. In a sense, we don't. Rather the text is different with each reading because we are different. But in other ways there is some constancy. A re-reading is more likely to lead to a richer and more complete interpretation on a deeper level than to a divergent one. (The latter is necessary primarily if a misunderstanding occurred in the original reading.) Two readers usually find commonalities, although not necessarily total agreement, in their interpretations. But especially, constancy grows out of the use of the text to interpret itself. And the constancy, interestingly, permits reconsideration, encourages development of thought, even while part of the experience remains the same.

"Art offers us one advantage that life cannot: we can re-experience it. We can be sure that Elizabeth will marry Darcy when we pick up Pride and Prejudice for the second or the fiftieth time. . . . Novels give us the opportunity to learn from experience and to bring that new insight to bear on the same experience" (Lever, 1961, p. 50). As we bring the new insight to bear, the text is interpreting itself. But is it fully the same experience? There is a common saying to the effect that "you can't go home again," or "you can't turn back the clock" and since the re-reading is a different experience from the first encounter, that is true in literature as well. Art may well be the closest we can come to a complete re-experience. Elizabeth will indeed marry Darcy on the fiftieth reading, but I will be seeing them rather differently by then. That new insight that is brought alters the experience.

In The Power and the Glory when religious practices are outlawed and the priest is in hiding for fear of his life, refusing to administer the sacraments or even to admit that he is a priest, is he coward or pragmatist? And when he later openly declares himself in order to minister to his people, is he hero or fool? And does my view of him change upon a reconsideration of him and his circumstances? As I grow older and hopefully wiser, more perceptive about human life and relationships, how does the priest change?

During a first reading of a text, the reader's interpretation is influenced by that part of the manuscript which has gone before. But in a re-reading the interpretation is influenced by both past and future text, since the reader already knows what is yet to come. If I re-read The Tale of Two Cities my interpretation of the first meeting of Sydney Carton and Charles Darnay in an English courtroom and of Carton's insolence and apparent contempt is coloured by my knowledge that Carton will later voluntarily die that Darney may live. My interpretation of Carton's character in the earlier episode is much more sympathetic since it is influenced by the knowledge of both Carton's selflessness and his self-contempt. Re-reading gives the reader a wholistic view and a responsiveness to the text which is not possible in a first reading during which the reader trustingly and somewhat blindly follows the text's lead.

And this knowing what is ahead seems to enrich rather than "spoil" the story. Alice points out that "with a great novel that you've read many times, you certainly know what happens. You know that in Pride and Prejudice Elizabeth is going to marry Darcy. You know that and yet you can re-read and still be upset by his arrogance." The re-reading does not only permit another involvement in the story; it adds dimensions. "If a novel is good, we do not miss the suspence of not knowing what is to happen next. On the contrary, the tension created by our foreknowledge and the inevitability of conclusion makes for far more absorbing reading than simple curiosity" (Lever, 1961, p. 50).

The reader's desire to know what happens may be why readers sometimes skip ahead and read the last few pages of a narrative early on. The attempt may be to get the benefits of re-reading during an actual first reading. It must partially fail since the intervening sections of the story do matter, but it also partially succeeds since, like re-reading, it allows the reader to use later information to interpret earlier text.

Alice suggests that in reading ahead and learning the outcome, we may allow ourselves a more leisurely and enriched reading. It's no longer necessary to race along and find out "what happens," so we are free to slow down and enjoy the journey. She adds a possible explanation—of some concern to teachers—as to why we often resist this reading ahead. "Do you think it's one of those things that people are taught when they're little that they mustn't look ahead, maybe because you have to write a book report and you might do it without reading the middle?" What a constant sorting out of motives teachers face. And teachers probably often think that if students know the outcome of the story they will not pay attention in class.

Re-reading appears to be one of the very few experiences in life which allow us to throw off the shackles of time. The future, that is text yet to come, influences the past, text that has gone before. This is an unrealistic event, in that it never happens in real life. Not only does knowing the outcome influence our interpretation of later text and allow for a more leisurely or selective reading, but also the "inevitability" of which Lever speaks heightens our awareness. We know outcomes, but can do nothing about them. So if we find them desirable, there is a delicious sense of anticipation; if tragic, there is the frustrating sense of futility, the slippery slide into "if only . . ." In a small way, for a moment, we can see in a god-like way, knowing the best course of action, but watching the characters for better or worse, make their decisions and play out their lives. This temporary omniscience is a welcome change from the "seeing through a glass darkly" which is our daily lot in life. But it is also reassuring to know that the omniscience only lasts a moment, and we can return to our normal limited view with its limited responsibilities.

While some readers do not re-read novels, there is little point in reading poems only once. Some people never read poetry at all, and sometimes one reading of a poem is enough of a taste to end consideration of the particular poem. But the first reading is really an appetizer, tantalizing us with hints of insights to come. When we encounter for the first time:

> Hope is the thing with feathers
> That perches in the soul,
> And sings the tune without the words,
> And never stops at all.

there may be an initial reaction of "Hope sings the tune without the words—what does that mean?" But with a little reflection it becomes a well-chosen metaphor. It is the nature of hope to have the general idea but not the details; we know what we hope for; we have the tune,

even when we are not certain how the hoped-for result could arise so there are no words. And hope as tune is surely appropriate: It is the nature of hope to sing, to rise gladly from the dark ground and soar into the light, an image borne up on the singing and the feathers. Ultimately, the essence of hope—that which makes hope, hope—is exactly that it "never stops." No matter how remote its chances, hope fortunately can be totally unreasonable. Martin speaks of gaining a new appreciation for hope after spending some time in the third world.

> Those people are so desparately poor, so totally impoverished, and economically their situation is gradually getting worse. They literally have nothing, in a way that is impossible for us to understand. But they live on hope: hope that things will get better, that this year their crops will grow, that their children will stay well, that they will win the lottery, just hope for improvement of all sorts. Looked at realistically, there is no reason to expect any of those things to happen. Just the opposite, in fact. But that's when I decided it's a good thing hope doesn't go by reason.

Although this is just the beginning of reflection on Dickinson's lines and although they will suggest other interpretations to other readers, they can already indicate the utter despair of having

> Nothing to look backward to with pride,
> And nothing to look forward to with hope.

How could anyone live without that tune singing in the soul? Here is another first reading showing itself inadequate and begging to be examined in light of my own lived experience with hope and hopelessness.

Poems are so compactly arranged and so embedded that they ask to be unpacked slowly and with real thought. Understanding a poem requires sensitivity to the inextricable intertwining of language, ideas and emotions within it. The first reading can be only a promise.

Readers speak of the ability of a poem to create mood and to express clearly what they have found to be true in personal experience. When we read:

> The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
> But I have promises to keep,
> And miles to go before I sleep,
> And miles to go before I sleep.

we not only envisage the beauty of the scene, but also implicitly know the balance of pleasure and responsibility, the sense of life waiting to be lived. This ability of poets to reflect our personal truths back to us provides two kinds of reassurance. Firstly, it reaffirms our common humanity by its evidence that our thoughts and experiences are indeed shared and real to others. And secondly, poets communicate what we may have felt, but felt inarticulately. Our personal and perhaps jumbled thoughts are expressed with clarity and precision. A sense of community is established as the reader's world merges for the moment with that of the text in a genuine fusion of horizons.

Those lines that speak so clearly to our own experience and are much appreciated tend to lodge and stay "gentle on my mind." Often the memorization is not deliberate, but later within the context of a particular situation a few lines spring to life. Walking home at the end of an April day feeling the sun and the chill, I am suddenly aware that floating easily through my mind is:

> The sun was warm but the wind was chill.
> You know how it is with an April day.
> When the sun comes out and the wind is still
> You're one month on in the middle of May.
> But if you so much as dare to speak,
> A cloud comes over the sunlit arch,
> A wind comes off the frozen peak,
> And you're two months back in the middle of March.
> (Frost, 1972, p. 111)

And there is the firm knowledge that, yes, that is how April is.

And what of those rueful days when:

> The world is too much with us; late and soon,
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.

and know that that is exactly what we have done. We have made waste of what might have been; the getting and spending have so fully occupied us and been so futile. But the poem's power to tell us has sharpened the dull dissatisfaction into acute understanding. The text is interpreting both itself and us.

What We Re-read

As already noted, poetry is either not read at all or re-read. It is almost always too compact to be fully understood at once. And short poems are re-read almost inadvertently. We go over them several times focusing now on this detail and now on that.

Discursive writing is frequently re-read for study purposes. Rechecking the information or directions in a manual, studying for an examination, reconsidering the presented argument or logic, or making another attempt to follow the text's reasoning are all common reasons given for re-reading.

But when readers are asked about re-reading, their answers are frequently given in terms of novels, often those that are commonly described as high quality literature. Pat, in a list that seems fairly typical cites "Hardy, Austen, Tolkien, and of course, the Narnia chronicles."

Martin makes a further distinction within "good" literature.

> Novels which I like and will re-read should not be confused with those that I very much appreciate but choose not to re-read.

> Those that are shattering or desolating I can appreciate as brilliant and powerful literature, but precisely because of their impact of horror I don't want to return to them. I know that Crime and Punishment is important literature and I'm glad I've read it, but it is so devastating and depressing, I don't want to go back to it. But some other novels by illuminating alternate responses to life-situations build hope. You take To Kill a Mockingbird. Through all the humour of those kids and the drama of the trial, there is Atticus. He is so unpretentious, but when called on to defend a black man in a case he knows will stir violent community opposition, he's so unflinching. Remember how he tells his brother that he had hoped to get through his career without a case like this, but when it came he had to follow his conscience. That book shows fallible human beings muddling through, but there's still some humour and purpose in life. I've read it several times and in spite of the tragedy it's hopeful rather than depressing.

Stories with too much horror are unlikely to be read more than once. But it's another matter for those books whose characters are friends, or those which have the stabilizing effect of which Nancy spoke earlier or the regeneration Martin notes. Just as there are in art galleries paintings I can appreciate as works of art but would not want in my house, so there are books that remain acquaintances only. Once is enough. Other paintings can be lived with. Their colour, texture, total presence is welcome daily. And some books speak with a voice that is livable, indeed that is eventually that of an old friend.

> Other readers give their personal favourites.
>
> Pat: During my teens I re-read the Narnia chronicles about every two years, each time with more understanding of the allegory, the symbolism and the Christian themes. This eventually led me to read Lewis' Christian literature for adults.
>
> Nancy: Whenever I'm ill, I re-read Jane Austen.
>
> Gibson: Her novels [Jane Austen's] are not airport reading. They are for reading over and over, savoring every phrase, memorizing the best of them, and getting an ever deeper

> understanding of Jane's 'sense of human comedy'" (1975, p. 458) [Gibson estimates that she has read Pride and Prejudice about 25 times.]

> Alice: I've read Pride and Prejudice and several other Jane Austen novels every January, since I've been a young woman, and each time I find something new. There's some controversy that if you read that kind of thing too young, it spoils it for you and you never get back to it, but if you read it at the right point when you're young, it makes a tremendous impression and becomes part of your maturation.

This considerable emphasis on Jane Austen is curious. It appears that we are unlikely to re-read those books which are profoundly disturbing, which probe the depths of human suffering, such as Gulag Archipelago. But it is not entirely fiction; it's author lived it, at least in part. In real life the horror can go on and on. But in art we want some balance, some relief. Along with the tragedy, we need touches of humour as noted in To Kill a Mockingbird, or romance, or some other evidence that the human condition is not totally depraved. Jane Austen may well be so commonly re-read because of her calmness, her equilibrium and detachment. Her human insights are accompanied by humour and romance. And the failings of her characters are those of pettiness, small meanness and limited vision on a personal level, not deliberate destruction on a national scale. Her dispassionate prose keeps the characters and their small social world in perspective. And it all safely comes out well.

Oral Reading as Re-reading

All of the foregoing comments have assumed a silent reading of the text, a situation in which the reader is alone with the text, either by actually being in a room alone or being undisturbed by any others who may be present. The encounter is between reader and text.

Silent reading is a solitary activity which not only does not require another person to be present, but actually works best if no one else is there.

Oral reading is a very different matter. It requires an audience. And it is normally a re-reading which has been prepared by the reader. That is, a person who anticipates reading aloud takes the text and practices reading it, often several times, deciding first what interpretation is to be conveyed and then what voice inflections, pitch and stress will best convey the meaning. The reader prepares the presentation as an actor rehearses a role, and for exactly the same reason: each is giving a performance. In an oral reading the interaction is no longer between reader and text, rather there is a bonding together of reader and text so that they in combination can interact with the audience. The whole reason for the activity shifts. This is demonstrated by such factors as that oral readers, unless they are on radio, try to look at the text as little as possible and at the audience as much as possible—a procedure that is obvious nonsense in silent reading. The newscaster on the air, the minister in church, or the parent with a young child—none of them are reading aloud to find out for themselves what the text says, rather they are attempting to communicate to their listeners what they already know about it. It is possible to give an expressive oral reading with minimal attention to the meaning being conveyed; this happens because the reader is attending to the performance and the reaction of the audience rather than to the text. In these circumstances it is unlikely that the reader will learn very much new about the text, except possibly that a certain sequence of words is difficult to pronounce without stumbling.

The most expressive oral readings are given when the reader feels confident enough in the situation to be free to attend to the text; that requires, among other factors, preparation of the reading. Lack of preparation combined with attention to the social context rather than the text is likely to result in a less expressive reading. Paul recalls an experience when, as a college student, he was asked to read aloud in class. When he finished, the teacher said, "I don't believe you know what you have just read. Tell me what it was about." The teacher had rightly detected that Paul's attention was not on the text itself. By remembering his own voice, as it were, saying the words and by rapidly skimming the text in front of him, he was able to give a summary of the content. While he regarded the experience as a narrow escape from embarrassment and the teacher was deceived into thinking that he had comprehended the first time, Paul's failure to think about the text during the oral reading was a common enough experience.

This may call into question the traditional classroom practice of asking young children to read aloud from an unfamiliar text and then to answer comprehension questions on it immediately afterwards. It explains, however, why the other members of the class often are better able to answer than the child who reads aloud; the others had time to think since they did not have to perform. The point here is not to say that children should never read aloud—expressive oral reading is a very useful skill—rather it is to question the intent and the circumstances under which the reading often takes place in the classroom. Oral reading then needs to be a re-reading, is a performance, and should not be confused with a silent re-reading which is a very different experience.

The only way that a reader can read a text without making an interpretation is to read with no meaning in mind. As soon as the reader has a meaning in mind, not only has the possibility of interpretation been made available, but at least a tentative interpretation is already forming. The experience of listening to a chanted oral reading soon makes apparent how difficult it is to extract meaning and therefore how thoughtless it is. Such an oral rendition without meaning may have ceremonial value, but it has nothing to do with re-reading since the whole purpose of re-reading is to interpret and reinterpret.

Talking it Over, Revisited

The primary conversation in reading is between reader and text. But I cannot always be sure that I have grasped the complete meaning of the text, or even that I have made an interpretation consistent with the author's intent. In conversation this uncertainty is the basis for most of the references to re-reading ("I think it means . . ., but I have to read and re-read this"). The more complex I find the text to be, the more that is so. So I continue the search by re-reading. Most times if I am persistent enough I eventually gain at least a partial understanding, although this is usually accompanied by an uneasy feeling that I may be misreading. But occasionally I just cannot make sense of the text. Having failed in my textual dialogue with the author, my only recourse is to discuss the passage with a hopefully more enlightened friend or teacher. Or, having made a tentative interpretation, I can seek verification in the views of another reader; ". . . extreme conceptions of individualization have desocialized the reading process. Reading can be the basis for recovering the lost art of conversation. It can provide grounds for debate, speculation, the comparison of alternative interpretations of meaning" (Eisner, 1976, p. 12).

If two readers disagree, both may return to the text and read it differently than previously since each now has in mind the other's views. As I re-read, I examine the text through my friend's eyes. This kind of challenge to my interpretation may result in a confirmation of my original position, a substantial alteration of view toward that of my friend, or a decision that the text is ambiguous and accommodates divergent interpretations.

For Nancy, it is interesting not only if someone shares her view, but it can be "equally productive if someone read the same book but did not have the same reaction. The diversity leads to re-reading and reassessment, because we can get bound by our own areas of interest." While the diverse interpretations can be stimulating, there is implicit in Nancy's statement, the impetus toward consensus. If two readers disagree and walk away, there is no need for reassessment. But that abandonment is accompanied by discontent. We do seek to share a view.

Merleau-Ponty (1964a) uses the example that when two friends are viewing a landscape and one sees something the other does not, the first person does not want the friend to see an analogous world but to see the same thing. We have probably all had the experience of hearing an impatient tone enter our friend's voice when we have been unable to see what was being pointed out, or of feeling impatient when a friend failed to comprehend our observation. Similarly in discussing a text I would like my friend to take my point, to "see what I mean." Not surprisingly, that frequently does not happen, as my friend responds to the text and to my interpretation of it from a different and personal perspective. If we then re-read the text in light of each other's comments, a second discussion may possibly find us seeing a more shared landscape; it will certainly find us seeing a different one than we first saw.

This opportunity for discussion and sharing is as necessary between pupil and teacher as between friends, although the nature of the relationship, and hence the discussion, differs somewhat. In the curriculum theory of reading, the term "instructional level" is used to designate those texts that a child can read with the teacher's help. That is, they are neither so difficult as to be beyond the child's understanding, nor so easy that the child can comprehend them independently. But understanding grows if there is opportunity for discussion with the teacher, if the child can ask about puzzling ideas, if the teacher can ask questions that intrigue and challenge, if they can genuinely share ideas. If the stance of lovers is face to face seeing nothing but each other, and the stance of friends is shoulder to shoulder looking out at a shared world (Lewis, 1960), perhaps the stance of teachers and pupils is the teacher looking over the child's shoulder sharing the involvement in the child's activity and learning.

When a teacher re-reads in preparation for teaching, the attitude is one of seeking for ways to share insights. And out of that search, new insights are born. The pupil, on the other hand, re-reads as part of the struggle to interpret, to understand. But again, new insights are born. And who of us as teachers has not had our understanding of familiar text deepened by the thoughtful comments of young students? The sharing truly works both ways.

Accompanied Journey

The essence of re-reading then appears to be found in the attempt of reader and text to enter a shared world. Reader and text question each other, respond, reconsider and seek by their combined efforts to move closer toward the truth. This is not an end to be striven for as hastily or adamantly as possible; much of the delight—and perhaps much of the truth—is in the search. And so the reader willingly returns to the text to extend and deepen the sharing.

Oh yes,
Way leads on to way
And I do not come back.
Frost was right.
As I move on
Accumulating this, abandoning that
My baggage trails along
An ever-shifting life-collection.
But some things I clutch,
Experiences not only remain

They shape me, alter the way I walk
(Especially those I would like to forget).
And books, my precious books
I've dragged them across field, strait and prairie
And done it gladly, hugging them close.
And when the town was new, and the welcome tentative
The stories and poems were there
Familiar, comforting, ready to enfold me,
In a distant land I felt my foot again on native soil.
When the town is no longer new
Now freely sharing with me its woes, struggles and petty tensions
Again—still—my stories have open arms
They listen and they speak
But differently now
Highlighting what is pertinent today
Somehow known, yet new
Reliable but changing.
And when I pack up again, as I surely shall
The dialogue, too, will be ongoing.

Chapter V

TIME

Clock Time and Inner Time

In western culture we have established for ourselves that time is invariant and segmented. We learn in school that a second is a small unit of fixed duration and that sixty of them make a minute. Each minute thus equals every other minute in duration, every minute (or second or hour) can be segmented. This segmentation makes it possible to freeze a unit of time, lift it out of its sequence and examine it. Such an approach to time (and to space, among other concepts) is basic to empirical thought. A moment is objectified in order to be studied. It works like the stop-action feature of a movie projector. A picture that had been in motion as an indistinguishable part of a fluid scene is now frozen into immobility. It may now be examined at leisure, but it is distorted. It no longer has the meaning it had in action. The unity of the movie is gone and one is left with a series of segmented stills. "In the West, parts become discrete, atomized, and the whole becomes a sum, not a unity, of its parts" (Vernon, 1973, p. 4). Conceiving of the whole as merely the sum of its parts is so fundamental to our thinking that it has become a cliché, a given, no justification needed.

Implicit within the statement that the whole equals the sum of parts is the view that the whole is divisible into parts, is properly susceptible to dissection and analysis. And so time is not some fluid continuous unit but a sum of parts, be they milliseconds or centuries. And the parts are inevitably quantitative, i.e., mathematical. "Mathematics confirms the discreteness of property by reducing it to its own nature: quantity" (Vernon, 1973, p. 11). Time has become for us a mathematical quantity. In our language, time becomes a sort of commodity; we recognize that we have a limited "amount" of it and so we "spend" time and we "buy" time or we "waste" a bit of it. The underlying analogy to money is very strong here, since the terms seem to be "borrowed" from talk about money. But then we also say, do we not, that "time is money." Time, of course, can be "spent" to make money, but it is actually one of those gifts, like sunshine or blood, that we have all been freely given, along with life itself. But to limit and constrain time in this way is regarded as a convenience to make it manageable. "The very concept of an event in nature is the result of the human programme of cutting nature up to make it intelligible" (Spurling, 1977, p. 39). Intelligible, that is, according to certain objectified criteria which prefer to examine isolated pieces. Regarding time mathematically is culturally bound. Not all peoples of the world think of time as a commodity to be "protected."

Vernon further points out that the view of time as a segmented quantity has spatialized time. It is thought of as space and is represented by points on a line. Indeed, physics and history are often taught with the aid of a chart, graph or time line in which time is illustrated as linear space.

> Time is, metaphorically, not a line, moving in one direction through only one real point, the present. Neither is it a

> stream or river, making us believe that the past pushes the present into view, which in turn pushes the future—the problem with all spatial metaphors is that they are based on motion, which itself presupposes time. Time is rather to be understood as a flux, a pattern of intentionalities. (Spurling, 1977, p. 39)

Motion requires time over which the motion can occur. Organizing time as points on a line requires motion from one point to another—which takes time. So the view of time as spatial becomes something of a tautology. Perception of time as segmented, invariant and linear is cognitive knowledge, school-based knowledge, that is thoroughly ingrained into us. But even so, it is as Nancy says, "artificial and arbitrary, man-made, not a natural mental thing." For this learned knowledge does not reflect our inner sense of the reality. As we experience it, a half hour spent in the dentist's chair is infinitely longer than two hours spent over dinner with a close friend, no matter what the clock may say. Our colloquial language reflects this state. We say both that "time drags" and "time flies" and see no contradiction or inaccuracy there. Interestingly, it typically does one or the other: "Time always seems to tease me, going either too slow or too fast" (Nureyev, 1963, p. 128). Thus, we are caught in a dichotomy in which we know, cognitively, that hours are invariant and linear, but we simultaneously know, experientially, that hours vary greatly. The cognitive view is the way we are taught to think and speak, so that we have words for this scientific knowledge of time but about inner time we are inarticulate. Awareness of inner time may be realized initially as nothing more than a vague sense of unease or incompleteness about the scientific assessments of time. It can be a relief from the constraints of world time to contemplate the experience of time.

William James identifies one contrast between them as being that the present as we experience it has duration, even though in a scientific sense the present is only a flash. When we hear a song we experience all the notes, the whole song, as being sung in the present. James thus finds two kinds of present: the split second one (which James in spite of the case he is making, calls "real"), and the one that is experienced as having some duration. "The practically cognized present is no knife-edge, but a saddle-back, with a certain breadth of its own on which we sit perched, and from which we look in two directions at once" (1890, p. 609). In a sense the present is forever because we live exclusively in it. To make another analogy to space, the past and the future are like the horizon—always there in the distance but never reached. The present is the field in which we stand. Nancy describes how her consciousness of time is on the horizon of the future.

> Time for me is never the time in which I'm doing something. I'm very conscious in terms of future time. I plan my courses months in advance, for a whole term, and I know what we'll be doing in any course at any particular time. And I'm very conscious of when I have meetings and when I'm free. In that sense I'm conscious of time. But when I'm working or reading, time doesn't mean anything. There is no time. I suppose I could calculate what time I spend reading, but I'm not conscious of it.

Time is never the time in which I'm absorbed in my work. Time applies to the past and future, the horizons. What happens to it during the present, during involvement in work? How does it recede to the horizons? Certainly intentionality plays a significant part here. I intend to keep one eye on the clock and to stop working at a set time, or I intend to concentrate on the task and the ideas involved in it. Spurling's statement confirms Nancy's experience of time on the horizon and intentionality.

> The future and the past are experienced as the horizons of my living present. The future is that towards which my tasks and projects are directed, and hence it is that which makes sense of my present since it defines the orientation, or at least the style, of my present actions.
>
> The past is an ever-receding platform to my present situation, yet which is subject to continual re-interpretation in the light of my present and future projects. Future and past are not points on a line, but intentionalities that anchor me to my environment. (1977, p. 40)

If time is truly a flux of intentionalities, then future and past are inseparably involved in the present.

What then happens to time during reading itself. How is it experienced? And how does our experience of time in reading relate to our experience of time in other ordinary activities.

First there is the matter of entering the world of the text. Two acts of the will are implicit in the process of getting into the text. We must make the decision to "spend" some time with a particular text. That choice is made in clock time, it is the using of time: "I'll read for an hour," "I'll finish this book this evening," "I'll get as far as I can before it's time to leave." The second act of the will is a commitment to become involved with and open to the text. The moment of letting go of the reality of my physical surroundings and entering the world of the text is the moment of transition from clock time to inner time and to a different sort of reality. An analogy could be drawn to getting out of bed in the morning. It's fine to lie there and think about the need to get up, but nothing will happen until the moment of commitment to action. Fantasizing about being up, imagining the daily routine, may put me back to sleep or delude me into supposing I'm doing what I should, but it doesn't help. That final impulse to action is still necessary. And that action opens me to the world of the new day and whatever it may bring. In reading, this act of commitment is made fairly easily by people who like to read or by anyone who is eager to become acquainted with the particular text in hand. But it is precisely that moment that can so easily become the barrier to reading. People who don't enjoy reading find that when they sit down and start into a book they promptly think of several other things they would prefer to be doing. Just at the point where yielding to the text is required, they resist. And clock time is not suspended. A similar barrier is encountered when the text does not appeal but is "required reading," or when time suspension is not possible because we are really waiting to be called to an appointment and by being in a listening attitude are not permitting ourselves to slip entirely into the world of the text.

Obviously, it takes time to read a text, so that it is possible to measure how long we spend sitting with a book. This may be important in certain instances for ulterior purposes, such as studying for an examination. But time spent on a text tells nothing about the understanding we may be gaining. Within the reading act itself, clock time is irrelevant.

Ian describes part of it:

> I told myself that I would be faithful in reading for at least an hour every night—that's clock time. But when I start reading, I stop being aware of time. I'm caught up in trying to make sense

> of the text. Within that sense-making time, there's boring time, there's I-can't-understand-the-guy time, exciting time, resonant time when I'm resonant with the text, fuzzy time (either me or the author or both of us). It's a time when I put away certain things in my mind; I put out of mind the presence of the family and the approach of dinner time.

To be absorbed in reading is to lose temporarily our sense of clock time. But this awareness of the clock is a significant aspect of how we live and organize our lives, so that it is not easily pushed aside. We can afford to "lose" ourselves in the text only if there is no appointment waiting at the other end of the reading time. While reading is an act in the real world, it produces a sense of moving into another and inner world. As Ian's statement implies, the transition to the inner world is clear but is easily lost: "I guess when something happens that brings me to the attention of the world, only then do I realize that I have half an hour to get somewhere. Clock time recedes, but how far? I guess it's always there ready to be brought forward. It's very easy to get back into. In my day-to-day existence I'm guided heavily by a sense of reserving an hour of this time for some purpose."

The tension between clock and inner time is becoming apparent. As readers we find it most enjoyable to be lost in the text, but that can only happen when we are free to let go of the clock and attend whole-heartedly to the text. As long as clock time retains its grip, in the form of an impending appointment, we must as we read be careful not to slip too fully into the text. Like standing on a slippery slope and remembering to keep a handhold, or like relaxing for a few minutes but being careful not to go to sleep, the reader must remain balanced with a foot in each world. One aspect of becoming lost in a text is knowing that we can afford to slip the shackles of the clock, and give ourselves up freely to the text. There is no danger in getting lost because we aren't about to get into trouble for being away and there is time to return freely from the reading journey. Reader after reader testifies to the experience of moving easily into the text and feeling world time recede, but not recede very far if responsibilities call. Martin talks about the exception and Doug about the usual routine.

> Martin: I've always really enjoyed reading late at night. Picking up a book is a real pleasure when I know it's the last activity of the day. I always thought that was so because I could feel that the work and the worry of the day were over and that last hour or whatever were all mine, a personal treasure. And I still think that's part of it. I do look on my late-night time as mine to enjoy as I wish. But now that we're talking about time, it occurs to me that it's also a time when I can go freely into the reading with no concerns about the clock. Just jump in at the deep end and let the text wash over me. If I get really engrossed and time slips past me—which often happens—it's only sleep I've missed. There are no repercussions from other people. In the day-time that freedom to laugh at the clock seldom happens.

And Doug talks about the day-time:

> Clock time is my work day. I'm tired, I try to squeeze more and more into it. Time is a real consideration for me. I try to use my time efficiently. So I'm aware of work occurring in world time and of what I can squeeze into half an hour here and there. Even the kind of reading I select to do on the bus. I'm aware of how much time it takes and select accordingly. For reading occurring in inner time, I think of becoming unaware of manmade time, losing track of time. When I'm really caught up in a book I like, I lose sense of time. But I've got to have a more extended period of time to get me out of time. It doesn't happen that often. If I'm in the library with twenty or thirty minutes before class or a meeting, I keep an eye on the time so I won't be late. But as soon as that pressure is taken away, there are all kinds of things I can get into in fifteen or twenty minutes. Things can capture you.

Merleau-Ponty distinguished between "objective space," the space of tape-measures and rulers, and "existential space," lived phenomenal space (cited by Spurling, 1977). These two concepts of space are equally applicable to time. The readers cited above are, in fact, making that same distinction between the objective time of the clock and the existential time into which they delight to go when they can shake off the demands of the clock.

People who enjoy reading are acutely conscious of the lack of synchronization between being lost in a book (time is irrelevant) and the possibility of missing an appointment (time is very relevant). In this way, time is experienced as being very disjointed. The times are out of joint. That disjointedness, the tension (not necessarily conflict) between outer and inner time seems a common life experience which includes reading but is not exclusive to it. Cathy had been reading the work of the theologian Bonhoeffer, particularly that written while he was in prison for his anti-Hitler activities, and she remarked on ". . . his courage and the quiet strength that other people got from him even though at times he was very unsure of himself. It seems that in his days the external time was unordered and meaningless, but the inner time was where he found meaning and he could convey that meaning to others. His poetry conveys that, also the conflict between the inner reality of who I am, have been and want to be, and the outer reality." The prison environment heightens and dramatizes the conflict between the outer restrictions and coercions to which Bonhoeffer was subjected and the inner values and choices he held. And the clock can be a particular problem for a prisoner. But this consciousness of an intersection of clock and inner time seems a common, although fortunately usually a less dramatic, experience.

> Temporality is an intrinsic property of consciousness. The stream of consciousness is always ordered temporally. . . . The world of everyday life has its own standard time, which is intersubjectively available. This standard time may be understood as the intersection between cosmic time . . . and inner time. There can never be full simultaneity between these various levels of temporality, as the experience of waiting indicates most clearly. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 27)

Being in prison is presumably one form of waiting. (Is it also that being made to wait is a form of imprisonment?) And waiting is such a common experience that it serves well as an example of the disjointedness. In waiting the clock ticks too slowly and in reading for pleasure too fast, but the lack of "full simultaneity" with inner time is similar.

Cathy, in discussing Bonhoeffer, began by using the word "time," clock and inner time, and without any apparent change of topic ended by using the word "reality." With "inner reality" she was discussing meaning, values and a sense of who I am. That transition is more logical and natural than may be apparent at first. For inner time is a matter of inner reality, which is a matter of my meaning and vision. The two issues of disjointedness of time and of time-reality-meaning are brought together nicely by Heap (1977), based on Schutz, in his claims that reading occurs at the intersection of clock and inner time, and that the essential requirement of clock time is existence, but the essential requirement of inner time is meaning and relevance. Within clock time, existence is basic. Text and reader must both exist. And as Berger and Luckmann indicate, awareness of time necessitates consciousness, essential in reading. But existence and consciousness are not enough. In inner time, the fixed temporal order of world time becomes insignificant as our remembrances of past experiences, knowledge of the world and predictions about the future, along with our values and vision—our reality—can all simultaneously be brought to bear on the making of a text interpretation. This inner reality is a constantly shifting vantage point, however, as life flows on, and so exactly the same factors will not be involved again should we choose to re-read the text. The interpretation is thus bound to shift as well, whether slightly or significantly.

In order to examine further Heap's concept of the intersection of the two times, it may be useful to make an analogy from Spurling's analysis of space. Starting with Merleau-Ponty's concept of objective and existential space, Spurling (1977, p. 36) goes on to discuss existential space as including: (1) relationships in space such as top or near, (2) the space of night-time when the clarity of daylight is gone and the space forms itself differently, (3) the space of dreams or myths, (4) the space of dancing and (5) hallucinatory space. Each of these aspects of existential space has a parallel to inner time. Night-time, for example, is different than day-time, more intense, whether for better or worse. If all is well, the night is a time of stillness, rest, privacy, peacefulness in the "close and holy darkness." But in fear or illness, the night becomes infinitely longer than any day could ever be and more terrifying. Dreaming is at least as much a matter of lived time as of space, and so on for the others. Each of these aspects of existential space would be regarded as normal and healthy, except the last involving hallucinations. And that form by its pathology points up the intersection involved in the other forms.

"Objective space lies on the horizon of every existential space, so that, for example, the space peculiar to dreaming must still work on and refer to the spatially distinct objects of the real world. Indeed, the loosening of existential space from its anchorage in physical space is the defining characteristic of hallucinations" (Spurling, 1977, p. 37). Similarly, in reading clock time lies on the horizon of inner time. Clock time must recede to the horizon, but not disappear out of sight entirely. To live exclusively in inner time is a mark of illness, being as the cliché so descriptively puts it, "out of touch with reality." The horizon of clock time is no longer visible. To live exclusively within world time and have no inner reality, no vision, is just as pathological, although less likely to end in hospitalization. Reading is at the intersection, encouraging, necessitating, the two kinds of time, even if the movement between them is a little disjointed. And reading allows swings deep into the territory of inner time because clock time is always on the horizon, just as some very routine tasks (doing the laundry, shovelling snow) which are exclusively in world time occupy the hands while allowing the mind to forage off toward inner reality.

Ultimately, however, we are clock-watchers and in spite of our brief escapes we always feel the pressure of time at our backs creeping up on us. "Always at my back I hear / Time's wingéd chariot drawing near." And that consciousness leads to two opposite concerns about reading and time. On the one hand, we are eager to "save" time and hence to make the reading go as fast and efficiently as possible. On the other hand we sometimes use reading as a way to "kill" time, make it pass by.

In our efficiency-conscious society, the possibility of speed reading has proven very attractive to many people. When there is a great deal of paper sitting on one's desk waiting to be dispensed or otherwise dealt with, it is an advantage to get through it quickly. When professional journals arrive each month and one wants to keep abreast of ideas but not plod through trivia or re-read what is already known, skimming and scanning are very useful skills. For such purposes, rapid reading is helpful. And acute awareness of the clock is one way to get work done.

But, of course, to go too rapidly is to miss many details. If details are important, for example in reading a recipe or some other instructions for assembling something, it is usually necessary not only to go very slowly, but to re-read. If we are in a very great hurry to understand a text, we may go so rapidly that we understand virtually nothing and are not really reading at all. This is particularly so if the message of the text has great personal import in our lives. Students scanning a list of names of those who passed an examination, for instance, have been known in their intense anxiety to miss the one thing they were seeking, their own names. The combination of haste and emotional involvement make perceiving and understanding difficult. Jane Austen illustrates that situation in her description of a young woman, very much in love, who was badly upset by a quarrel with her lover, so that when she received a letter from him: "She read, with an eagerness which hardly left her power of comprehension, and from impatience of knowing what the next sentence might bring, was incapable of attending to the sense of the one before her eyes" (Austen, 1972, p. 233). There are times when speed just is not helpful, and it is necessary to take a deep breath and force ourselves to slow down.

Those instances in which saving time is important turn out to be related to work, business, getting the job done. What about personal reading? As discussed earlier, a significant difference between reading for information and reading for pleasure is that with the former the intent is to finish the reading in order to utilize the information gained, whereas when reading as a leisure activity, the pleasure is in doing the reading itself and it makes no sense to speed read. Wanting to hurry through one's pleasures is not the most logical of approaches. Also, part of the enjoyment is in savouring the richness of the language and the descriptive detail, in letting the world of the text rest gently on the mind and be envisioned, and in freeing the imagination to build on the proferred account. Such activities take time. Davies pours full dramatic scorn on the notion of speed reading in his discussion of

> . . . the actual business of reading—the interpetative act of getting the words off the page and into your head in the most effective way. It is not the quickest way of reading, and for those who think that speed is the greatest good, there are plenty of manuals on how to read a book which profess to tell how to strip off the hulk and guzzle the milk, like a chimp attacking a coconut. There are remedial reading courses for adults who are dissatisfied with their speed, which show you how to snatch up clumps of words with your eyes, and how to bolt paragraphs at a glance, so that a determined zealot can flip through War and Peace in five hours, and, like a boa-constrictor, gobble up all Plato in a week. But if you read for pleasure, such gormandizing will not appeal to you. What musician would hastily scan the pages of a sonata, and say that he had experienced it? (1961, p. 11)

The comparison to music is insightful. Just as the notes written down are only a score and must be played or sung to become music, so a text must be encountered by a thoughtful reader in order to be brought to life and fruition. Neither score nor text were intended to lie dormant, nor to be hastily devoured.

We have a great concern for speed and efficiency. But 'twas not ever thus. In the 1600's it was said: "Learn to read slow; all other graces will follow in their proper places." As for our interest in reading widely and absorbing as much as possible, no less a luminary than William Penn wrote in 1699: "Much reading is an oppression of the mind and extinguishes the natural candle which is the reason of so many useless scholars in the world" (Journal of Reading, 22(7), 1979).

Penn's logic seems rather doubtful, but it is clear that not all reading is particularly informative or inspirational and isn't meant to be. Some of it is done just to kill time while waiting or trying to unwind. And perhaps reading too much can on occasion induce a kind of dull-wittedness. Heather, who loves to read, admits that it's not an entirely unmixed blessing. "I've often been depressed by reading, too. You can read yourself into a sort of stupor. If you spend a great deal of time reading, you sometimes feel kind of numb, as if somebody'd hit you over the head." How can that be so? How can an activity that can be so insight-giving, so much a stimulant to the imagination lead to numbness and stupor? Perhaps there is a clue in that word "stimulant." Perhaps reading, like a drug, can produce a variety of effects, depending on the way in which, and the purpose for which, it is taken. How does reading to kill time differ from reading to learn or to enjoy the encounter?

In reading such texts as mystery stories or romances, we feel the fascination of wanting to know "who done it" and how it comes out, but when we get to the end there is a certain emptiness. And mindlessness. People speak of reading such books when "I'm too tired to think" or "when I want to unwind, so that I can sleep" and add that such stories are immediately forgotten. "It's not the kind of meaning that stays in my mind. It's rather ephemeral, so that I can read the same thriller a couple of years later and not remember that I've read it until I'm well into it, unless it's been something that has intrigued me very much." For Nancy, there is a kind of immediate relief, but little lasting value, in such reading. This is not to say that she regards it as undesirable. There is, indeed, a place for ephemeral things. But the pleasure derived is temporary and superficial. It is reading done as she says "on the very surface of my mind."

Pat divides her reading into several categories, one of which is a mindless sort of no value in itself: "My relaxation reading (Barbara Cartland) is literally getting to sleep at night. That really is lightweight. It's the sort you hide because you don't want anybody else to know you read it!"

The reading which is done solely for an ulterior purpose such as getting to sleep or killing time in an airport or doctor's office does not originate so much from a wish to become acquainted with a particular text as from a desire to make the time pass, since what we are really doing in those circumstances is not reading, but waiting. "Reading to pass the time is hopeless. Even if it's a good book. If

I'm sitting in an airport and I'm going to read for half an hour because I have to spend half an hour doing something, I'm completely distracted unless I read a few sentences and I get into real reading, so that I'm not just passing time anymore." As long as the mind attends to the clock rather than the text, the waiting continues and the minutes drag. Sometimes, especially if there is tension in the waiting, that is all that happens. The voice of the text is not heard and I hardly have any idea what it is about. Other times, the voice _is_ heard and I become engaged in dialogue. Then I am actually reading, and only incidentally waiting, instead of vice versa as before. At such times I may even go so far as to hope not to be called to my appointment unless I have finished the article. Or I may quickly skim, read the ending, in case I get interrupted. The very term "interrupt" indicates the shift. On those occasions on which I look at the text but continue to wait, being called is not an interruption but a release.

In reading, our primary or focal attention must be on the meaning, we must be willing to be carried on the frigate of the book to another world and to become primarily involved in it. Only subsidiary attention at most is left for the print, for the consciousness that "reading" is in fact what we are doing, and for the physical world around us. A pianist must give focal attention to the music and subsidiary attention to the score, instrument and fingers. If those two become reversed and focal attention shifts to what the fingers are doing, the pianist is likely to become disoriented and unable to continue playing (Polanyi, 1958). So when as readers our focal attention is given to "killing time" or waiting, the text becomes virtually meaningless. Reading is then no longer an activity and a dialogue, but rather it has become a drug used to produce an altered and hopefully more pleasant state of mind.

It reduces the strain of doing nothing, and negates the necessity of living creatively inside my own head, of thinking (which is an excellent opportunity available during waiting time, provided we are able to pursue it). Reading is easy. Nancy: "I can't go very long without reading. That's why I think in some ways reading may be a drug. 'Hooked on books' is an apt phrase. In our family reading was a good and appropriate thing to do. I had a friend whose mother was always telling her not to waste any more time reading. But I'm almost certain that in our family it was that you couldn't sit doing nothing. So what one did was to read." Sometimes the reading, or at least the appearance of reading is done for the sake of appearances. Being seen to be reading may be regarded as acceptable behaviour. In those instances we make certain we have a book open in front of us. But it can just as well be that the reader is hooked and is virtually unable to sit empty-handed. Somerset Maugham once remarked that he "would sooner read a timetable or catalog than nothing at all."

In a conversation between historian Arnold Toynbee and his son Philip, this same notion of being hooked arises.

> PT: I read them [thrillers] with half my mind and I never puzzle out who has done it, or anything like that. I think I read them because it is easier to be reading something than nothing.
>
> I think there's a disease of reading. I can't sit in a railway train without reading something. Even if I have to look through the advertisements in the back of a newspaper, I find myself reading. It's a very bad thing.

> AT: It is a disease that an Indian would despise one for. One ought to be able to contemplate, and to do that at any time and under any conditions.
>
> PT: I sometimes look out the window and think how pretty it is, but I find myself getting a bit nervous if I haven't got some print in front of me. (Toynbee, 1963, p. 94)

Why one ought to be able to contemplate anywhere is not very clear. Presumably, contemplation, like any other activity, is facilitated by appropriate circumstances. But what emerges strikingly in this conversation is the strength of the "habit" of reading. It is almost stated in terms of a drug habit. "I get nervous without print" has overtones of needing a fix. Habits, of course, can be very strong and deviation from them quite uncomfortable. To contrast this view of reading as habit (disease, drug, compulsion) with the view of reading as having an experience of understanding (meaningful dialogue) is to see why reading to kill time must be set apart from "real" reading, and why the claim was made earlier that focal attention on time (waiting) interferes with an open encounter with the text. When this occurs clock time is too dominant, does not recede to the horizon, and inner time is too submerged so that they cannot properly intersect.

A final aspect of clock and inner time that needs consideration is how the reading encounter changes as the reader grows older. Becoming older is very much a matter of the calendar and invariant time, but how our thinking and attitudes change and develop is inner time. Doug discussed the change he sees in how he experiences reading.

> I think I've become more tentative as I've experienced more, but I'm not sure about that. I'm also more definite about things. I guess I see things less in simplistic terms and realize that they are more complex. I know I've become more definite about my political and moral views. There are things I reject out of

> hand. I hear Arthur Jensen and I don't hear anymore. It's gone. But in other ways—I read an essay last year on the hidden curriculum. It made lots of sense, but it had a new point in it that I'd never encountered before and I was tentative about accepting it. But then, as I thought about it and had a chance to talk it over that seemed to help clarify it—it's a pretty definite fixture in my thinking at this point. So at first I wondered, but then as I lived with it awhile and talked a bit about it, I finally came to accept it.

The sense that Doug expresses of feeling both more definite and more tentative is familiar enough and is confirmed by other readers. As we mature, we become more certain of the values we hold and less easily persuaded by some fast-talking text that supports a position we have thought about and rejected. But it also means that when a new concept is presented to us, we are more tentative, less likely to accept or reject it out of hand. In being slower to make up our minds, we are more thoughtful—or at least, we give ourselves the opportunity to be more thoughtful—about the new idea. This attitude of tentativeness allows for greater tolerance than we had when making the quick judgments of our youth, and greater tolerance is an attribute of increasing maturity.

At the same time it also allows for more critical judgment. Betty is very much aware of that aspect.

> When I started university, anything that was in a textbook that looked knowledgeable pretty well had to be true. I would read and accept without question. Also whatever meaning came to me as I was reading, I would accept unless I was forced to go back. I think I still tend to do that with novels, but with textbooks I used to accept my first interpretation whereas now I'd be more inclined to do some other reading to see if I could get further clarification. I'm definitely more critical now.

It's interesting how a measure of tentativeness in interpreting and responding simultaneously promotes more critical judgment and more tolerance. For both take some time and thought. Snap judgments preclude both. The reader who is willing to consider an idea, temporarily accept it perhaps while playing with it, has a good chance both of understanding it, seeing why it appealed to its writer, and of responding finally in an intelligent and logical way, whether that response is pro or con. The reader must ultimately decide. The goal is not to sit on the fence forever. But clock time can be a very useful servant of inner time.

Martin also supports Doug's assessment:

> When I first read an idea now, I have a sense of just letting it sit there. It's almost like saying to the author, 'O.K., I see that idea, but I have nothing to say about it yet. Show me what you're going to do with it, how you will support or develop it. And let me think about it for awhile. Let me see how it corresponds to other concepts on the same or related topics.'

As we get older and have less time, we need more of it. (Or perhaps, it's that we are wiser in the use of it.) This "wait a bit and see" attitude does allow not only for more tolerance of the views of others, but also for more understanding of their situations and their reactions in those situations. So the attitude toward text in this case has immediate and powerful implications for interpersonal relationships, which is to say that it has implications for personal maturity and character development, a concern Heather raises.

> Reading was more of an escape for me at one time. Now that I'm older I don't like romances, I like stories that are more in touch with what's really happening. But I read less fiction than I used to; I find it more important to read books that touch on some philosophical or spiritual dimension. One hopefully is changing as a person. I like to think that I'm becoming more understanding and more knowledgeable. Therefore, our reading should be a part of that.

Heather's daily round and her reading are coming closer together. Integration is another dimension of maturity. She is less likely to wish to escape into a rose-tinted world, where the text makes all too clear the barrier between itself and real experience, and more inclined to seek texts that speak directly to her daily life and its concerns. A wall between "reading" and "living" is not built but torn down so that reading is an integral part of living. Integration leads to integrity which leads to wholeness.

Yvonne also feels less separation between the two than in her youth, so that now she is conscious of reading happening within time and within life, not outside it. This gives her more perspective on the text and allows her to be both cooler and more appreciative in her responses than was previously possible.

> As I've grown older, reading has a different dimension in my life. I think when I was young—I guess I began seriously reading when I was about twelve or thirteen—reading was realer than life. The characters in books and their situations were realer than in life. Part of that was that I had the feeling, although I didn't articulate it until I was in my twenties, that people were more open in books. People in the books talked about and lived through things that I had no part of. And they weren't bizarre books. These were books about rather ordinary people, and the thoughts were legitimately in those books, whereas those things couldn't have been discussed at home. And I don't think we were a particularly rigid family that way.
>
> Now I'm much more conscious of time and much more objective about time in terms of reading than I was when I was young. Then time was a much more subjective experience. I don't identify with the characters as much now. I think, essentially because I have so much more experience than I did when I was a kid, that I'm much more appreciative of what the writer has been able to convey. I'm influenced by having studied university English, and if something really strikes me I'm intrigued by how it was achieved. Then I'll go back and think of it that way. I don't see that as being particularly intellectual. If anything it deepens the enjoyment. But the time dimension has changed for me.

Since Yvonne's life experiences, including her university study, are no longer so much cut off from the reading experience, she can bring them to bear on her interpretations and understanding and hence enter into a fuller dialogue, be more sensitive toward and appreciative of text and its detail, style, turn of phrase and story. When reading was "realer than life" it was another world and she shuttled back and forth between her daily life and her contrived world. Time belonged to the real world, so it had to be suspended in the non-real. Contrast was of the essence. That is no longer necessary. The two have been allowed to meet and partially to merge, certainly to influence each other heavily. The impulse and development are toward integration.

Time in the Text Itself

But the reader's sense of time does not form independently from the text. As in all other aspects of the reading encounter, there are dialogical features, and the text also has influence over how time is experienced. Some texts use time much more overtly than others. Yvonne points out that

> some authors leave us much more aware of time than others. I'm thinking of War and Peace where it seems to me you were very much aware of the time element. He would say, 'Late that October . . .' and then give a description of the city in October and the leaves whipping around in the streets so that you were much more aware of time. One of the cleverest stories I ever read as far as time was concerned was one by Doris Lessing. She talks about this marriage and there's nothing in the marriage except they celebrate Christmas and they go away for two weeks every summer. And the whole story just moves like that—6 o'clock, 12 o'clock, 6 o'clock, 12 o'clock. There are two points in the lives of those two people.

A text can explicitly create the sense of time passing or time dragging emptily if that is important to the theme being presented. But a novelist is in an interesting predicament in this regard. For the seeming length of time alters when recollected from what it was when lived. "In general, a time filled with varied and interesting experiences seems short in passing, but long as we look back. On the other hand, a tract of time empty of experiences seems long in passing, but in retrospect short" (James, 1890, p. 624). During the act of reading, which experience is the reader having? There is an immediacy, and often an involvement, in the story that is very much present time, but it is like past time in that the reader is thinking about the action rather than doing it. A text that tries to show emptiness in a character's life by dragging it out in the text risks boring the reader, but how else to show it? Fortunately, in most stories the attempt is to show something rather than nothing, action rather than emptiness. It is difficult to write interestingly about emptiness. But it can be done. Yvonne continues:

> In many novels there is a sense of both kinds of time operating on two different levels. In War and Peace that one winter seems to last and last because it's so cold and desperate. So that there is also a clear sense of inner time in which time doesn't pass evenly and certain seasons are very long. Probably the clearest example is Solzhenitsyn's A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich. It starts at 6:00 a.m. and literally tells about every hour in the day. And yet there are within that inexorable days that go on and on and on, so empty, dull and endless, forever.

An hour can be experienced as lasting indefinitely. And there is no connection between this sense of duration and the time actually spent reading.

Authors can also manipulate time in fiction in a way that is so unrealistic and contrived as to be disturbing to the reader.

> In fiction especially time gets turned around so much, and people in novels behave in a certain way which sometimes is so manipulated by flashbacks or whatever that it doesn't seem to have a reality of its own, it's just something that can be moved around for purposes of plot or whatever. It's not suitable at all. People don't always behave exclusively because of past experience.

Writers of fiction cannot assume that because the world they are creating exists only on paper, they have a freedom to arrange the time and characters as they please. Certainly flashbacks and other such devices can be used, but the resulting flow of time in the story must seem to the reader to be natural and appropriate to the story. Manipulation that is apparent fails. And as Alice points out, the characters cannot be seen merely as puppets pulled by the strings of their past—influenced by their past, yes, but not automatic responses based on a flashback conveniently inserted. Time is experienced in many variations, but it has its own constraints.

The type of narrative also affects the experience of time. Jeff notes that when he reads a mystery story his feeling is a great desire to whip through it and find out what happens. The reading is fast and the feeling somewhat superficial. "The story is trivial, and I know that when I eventually do find out what happens I'm going to wonder why I got excited about it in the first place." Although the long term results may not be very satisfying, the story is, for the moment, fast and exciting. Other sorts of narrative call up different responses. Jeff speaks of one novel which created for him "a remarkable sense of stillness." To read this story was to leave behind his own world with its particular distractions and pressures, and enter one with a very different rhythm and pacing to it.

> Far Tortuga is about turtle fishing. For the first 300 pages it's as if you were on this turtle fishing boat with nine other men and doing the chores of running the boat and talking during their mealtimes and idle hours about life back home, talk of the most trivial and unimportant kind. It's as if you are there living with the men, doing what they do at the pace they're doing it. Movement stops. Your life is sort of suspended and you simply readjust your rhythms to the rhythms of turtle

> fishing. What I learned about turtle fishing is that not much happens! At least until you actually do the fishing, then it's difficult, hectic, and even dangerous if the seas are rough. So for 300 pages very little happens except that nine people live out their lives for three weeks. It's tranquil and still and timeless. Then in the last sixty pages everything comes together. It took me as long to read the first 300 pages as it did those turtle fishermen to do the nothing that they did for three weeks, then the last sixty pages went fast because everything ends with a great swoop.

A reader who wants constant action will probably skip through those 300 pages and concentrate on the last bit as the only "good part" of the book. A reader who is willing to adapt to the text's life-style and enjoy the tranquility has the opportunity to slow down, perhaps pause, day-dream a little. If texts can create tense, high-action worlds that make the heart beat faster, they can also create stillness that gives reprieve, a genuine pause that refreshes. The text can create the mood, but the reader must be vulnerable to it and willing to join in. For the reader it's a bit like meeting a friend and being sensitive to the state of mind the friend is in at that moment.

While Jeff is pointing out stylistic distinctions within one text, Yvonne is aware of the effects of different writers on the reader's inner time.

> It seems to me that different authors have a different pace. I think for example of someone like Alice Munro. I read her very slowly because I don't want to miss any detail. I read her the way you look at wallpaper with a lot of detail and you just have to look a long time and you go slowly, but it's not slowly in the sense of tediousness. It's like a summer's day—you just savour it. And then you think of The World According to Garp and there's no other way to read it except to romp. He uses every trick in the book to keep that pace up for 500 pages. There are times when he doesn't do it, but you can't slow down. You're either romping or skipping.

How is the text able to prod the reader toward that variation in pacing? It would be possible to list stylistic devices such as sentence length which affect the reader's pacing and are a necessary part of the writer's craft, but are only the skill, not the art. Part of the art is the text's ability to create its own world; the world may be real or fantasy, inside or outside of the reader's experience, present day, past or future, big or little, described at great length or evoked in a phrase. It can be a huge world of battlefields and continents filled with thousands, or it can be as small as one person, but it must be clear, so clear that the reader sees it and feels it intimately and fully and can know it well. But the text must create its own world, make it come alive and open the door to invite the reader in. The text cannot compel and the reader can always decline, but the text must be as enticing as possible. (Fortunately for texts, people who like to read are rather willing to be lured in.) And the world can be tranquil or cataclysmic or anything in between and can move during the story from one to another. If the text can evoke its own special world in the first place, it can also alter it to one with quite different inner time. Readers are not only willing, but eager, to be involved in other than personal experiences and to feel the different time, clock and inner; that's one of the reasons for reading.

Jeff makes a comparison between effective narration and the passing of ordinary life.

> The way we live our lives day by day, we can't accelerate events. Events have their own kind of volition and life unfolds. We don't try to accelerate it to see what's going to happen. Yet in mystery stories we want the whole thing to unfold so we can see what's going to happen, then discard that book and begin on the next one. It's only a diversion, and not at all

> like living. Whereas more thought-provoking books are life, and events unfold as life unfolds. They'll end, we know that, but there's no hurry to get there.

In fact in life there is normally a distinct wish not to get there.

Included in this sense of no hurry for the text to end is having the time and the wish to day-dream. Reading can trigger the imagination, not only to visualize what is being read about, but to extend the story or the ideas in various directions, or to shift perhaps through metaphor or analogy to a different topic, or even just to digress through a whim of fancy into another interesting area.

Narrative, discursive writing, and poetry each have somewhat different relationships to time. One of the essential characteristics of narrative is that it includes change. If anything at all is to happen in the story, change must occur. And change takes time. In a narrative the time span encompassed can be anything from a second to centuries, but there must be recognition of time passing. The other two types of text require no such assumption. They may imply or discuss the passing of time, but they need not do so in order to be what they are. Discursive writing, however, is dated. When we read it, we want to know when it was written and take the time of writing into account as we read. Some discursive writing quickly becomes outdated and is read, if at all, largely for historical interest. That which remains relevant, however, still requires a date of writing as a guide to the context within which it must be interpreted. For example, we take into account when reading it that it was published before another text had been written. Neither of these conditions is necessary for poetry. A narrative poem is subject to the same time-for-change factor as other narratives. But lyric poems are not. To the extent that a poem deals with universalities, time is simply not an element. Rather poetry is holding the moment, eternity in a moment.

So texts by their style, structure, topics and worlds influence inner time. A strong constraint on texts is that by their nature they are presented as linear, flowing in a continuous line from beginning through middle to end, moving along through clock time. The story or argument must be made to flow along that same line whether or not it is itself linear and whether or not it was written in that order. This can be a point of tension between clock and inner time. The lay-out is linear. But the reading . . .?

Sequence and Endings

The logical way to read a book, as any school child knows, is to start at the beginning and progress systematically line by line, page by page, to the end. There even are sections in some reading readiness tests to find out if the young child knows this. And how often do teachers tell children to start at the beginning.

But is that how we usually read? Dictionaries, for example? Or sources when we are reading up on a topic in preparation for writing a paper? Discursive writing is typically read very selectively. With reference books (telephone directories, recipe books, atlases), our attention is confined to the item we are concerned with at the moment. In professional reading, such as journal articles, we select by title, skim very rapidly any parts containing familiar ideas, or consider only those sections that seem relevant at the moment. A common practice is to read the summary first and use it in deciding whether to backtrack and to what. Jeff claims, somewhat tongue in cheek, that his professional reading "is done by osmosis. Somebody comes in to my office and will be talking to me, and it will become important to check something out and we'll look it up and read a page or two. Who knows, maybe over the course of 20 or 30 years you do read all of a book, at least all the good ones." This sense of being pragmatic, and incidently non-linear, is very strong and is experienced as being "only common sense" in reading for information. Amongst people who do a great deal of professional reading, discursive writing is so commonly, almost predictably, not read straight through that it is remarked upon when an able reader is found who does proceed that way. One such, apparently, is Pierre Trudeau.

> Even more than his body, Trudeau disciplined his mind. Blessed with an exceptional memory, he read omnivorously and with a ferocious, head-down tenacity. 'I was never satisfied with reading eight chapters of a book, I had to read twelve.' Even when teachers recommended it, he never skipped. He has never altered this linear approach. Early in 1979, when members of the Task Force on National Unity gave Trudeau an advance copy of their report and met with him privately to discuss it, he asked them questions only about the first three chapters—all he'd had time to read. By contrast, Marc Lalonde at the same meeting hopped all over the map because, as most of us would when pushed for time, he had read only the summary of recommendations. (Gwyn, 1980, p. 32)

The fact that such a comment is included in a biography of Trudeau indicates how exceptional this reading pattern was thought to be. And while Trudeau is known to be an able student and quite well-read, this approach to discursive writing is not particularly efficient nor advisable to teach children to use. The method used probably necessitates an attitude of not being satisfied with eight chapters.

Teachers have a tendency to advise students to be linear in their reading. As a result, many of us read that way until we stumbled across the discovery, probably about first year university, that it's not possible to prepare term papers that way. The deadlines coming up force skipping. And gradually we figured out how to select, which parts to read, how to use an index most effectively, etc. More teaching about alternate ways of reading (other than "straight through") would not be amiss. Even young children should not be taught that linearity is always necessary or automatically desirable. That is misinformation. Indeed, changing the order is one strategy that may help to clarify when we are having trouble understanding. Skipping back and forth sometimes helps, as later text is used to inform earlier text. "Now I understand what is meant back there."

But stories are different. They have a sequence that builds through crisis points to a climax. Is it important to read them in the order given? Readers disagree and tend to form two groups: those who read in a fixed order and those who skip around in the text. With this difference of view it is interesting to examine both the reading approach and reasons given for it. First those who keep in line. Pat sees herself as a systematic person and rejects skipping ahead:

> I try not to do that; that's cheating. Cheating myself I mean. The author has a structure and a reason for organizing that way. I only skip a section or read the ending if I'm bored, otherwise I read in order. I think that's because of the kind of person I am—very methodical.

Such readers, very conscious of the linear arrangement of the text on the page, make the assumption that the author had valid reasons for the organizational pattern used and feel an obligation to respect the order, at least as long as their confidence is not betrayed. These people speak of skipping ahead in a novel as "cheating" and by that very choice of word indicate that such a thing is not to be done. Yvonne finds "trust" a key word. She begins rather tentatively with an author she hasn't read before, but if she finds the text increasingly valid as determined by her own experience, she builds up a relationship of trust. To read the ending early on is to "break the trust." Jeff follows a similar pattern: "I have a rule of thumb, I'm absolutely ethically bound that I'll never turn to the end and find out how it ends. Sometimes I'll sneak ahead and see if the name of the person I'm most interested in appears on the last page. That's the closest I'll come to cheating." (That's also about as close as it's possible to come to doing something while still claiming not to do it.) Terms like "sneak," "cheat," and "trust" indicate the moral/ethical force that these readers give to this decision. They are content to wait for completion and wholeness of text. Paul suggests that the reason it feels like cheating to him is that in real life we can't look ahead, can't see endings in advance of their happening. (Inner time permits skipping around, clock time does not.) Because reading is one form of real life experience, reading ahead feels like trying to cheat life. Cathy agrees that reading ahead and knowing the outcome, which is never possible in life while something is going on, is a means of using the future to influence the present in a way that can never happen in daily life. But she disagrees completely with the cheating idea, saying instead that she has very little control in her own life and likes to get it whenever she can. Reading ahead gives her a bit of control. An important key to the reluctance to read the ending early is in Pat's statement that it's "cheating myself." This implies that to know the ending may ruin a good story for me, that I enjoy the suspense and the living out of a story. A strong sense of story structure and of how stories ought to be told and experienced seems a good reason to leave the outcome to the end. Not everyone shares that feeling about stories, however.

Does knowing the ending really spoil a good story? If it's important not to know, why did The Day of the Jackal become a best-seller? It's a fiction account of an assassination plot against Charles de Gaulle. Anyone who has been paying any attention knows before picking up the book both that there were a number of attempts on de Gaulle's life and that they all failed. Thrillers are the sort of story in which it's supposed to be crucial not to know. Why read this one? Well, of course, there are still quite a few unknowns: does the assassin escape with his own life or not? what is the fate of the detective who is assigned to the case? how is the assassination attempt planned and executed (so to speak)? And the story is fast-paced and action-filled. But it also seems that for some stories, or some readers, or both, knowing the outcome adds to, rather than detracts from, the enjoyment.

Some readers, by contrast to the former group read the ending early in an attempt to achieve unity of text and to do it as soon as possible. As Cathy says, "When you do reach the end and you reflect on what you've read, there's a wholeness there. But I don't know if it's at the end in particular. I read the end of the novel first anyway, so that puts it into a whole framework for me, and I can see if there is a logical unity there." As in working a jigsaw puzzle, there is a sense that if the key pieces can just be put into place, the outline of the picture will become apparent and the details can then be filled in. But to have any sense of what the picture is, pieces showing outlines of the principal object are needed. And the ending is a key piece in seeing the whole picture. It is of course, possible to put that piece in either last or earlier on, but it is necessary that it be done and to do it early makes available the possibility of wholeness. Later text can, and in effective reading will, always be used to influence the interpretation of earlier text. If the text is read in sequence, the earlier text must be re-interpreted in light of later text in a gradual building of understanding; if later is read first it can be used immediately, although there is a risk of misinterpretation because of missing parts. In a sense the future is being used to influence the past in a way that it never can be in daily life. Some of the benefits of re-reading may become available on first reading.

Cathy adds that "reading ahead is one of my major strategies in whatever I read." The term "reading ahead" is almost self-contradictory. How can we be reading ahead of where we're actually reading? But the fact that such a term makes intuitive sense demonstrates the breakdown of linearity and the forming of something much more interactive and intertwined.

Alice also reads ahead: "I read the last page early, depending on what kind of novel it is. I admit it unashamedly." Although Alice is very free to make this statement and smiles as she does so, her use of the words "admit" and "unashamedly" conveys a sense that there may be something to be ashamed of, but she has sufficient confidence and bravado not to be. She also is very clear about her reason.

> It keeps me from rushing. Sometimes I find myself galloping through something just to find out what happened, so that way I can read and enjoy the author's attention to detail. If the author is literate and enjoying the historical part of it, then I can enjoy it also. Whereas if I'm reading to find out who gets the girl or how she outwits the wicked uncle, I miss all kinds of richness. I don't do this with everything, but I do with that type of romance or mystery that hinges on something. I don't have to know how the detective or whoever works things out because I like to see that progressing, but I do like to know who at the end.

Rather than detracting from the story in any way, Alice is saying that knowing at least a piece of the ending enhances her ability to appreciate the story since it frees her to attend more widely to a variety of aspects in the writing and to understand the text more fully. And she specifically uses this strategy on "light" reading, romances and mysteries, the very type that are often thought to be spoiled by knowing how it comes out.

But there is much more to a story, even to a thriller, than knowing how it comes out. It can be read as a puzzle to see if the pieces fit together. Nancy gives this as her reason for dipping into the ending. "Then I can pick up the clues as they come along and see if they all fit together and point logically toward the solution offered." Mystery stories are often not quite that cleverly crafted and discrepancies frequently appear. But be that as it may, reading in this way is almost a form of puzzle solving if the maker of the puzzle devised it properly. Paul offers another view of the pleasure of such stories: it may be read just for the thrill, a thrill that our routine doesn't provide and that we wouldn't want anyway, but which is fun as long as we really know that we are safe in our own homes. (When we feel ourselves genuinely threatened, such stories become distasteful very quickly.) Even as a thrill, this is a chance to see life through another lens and extend our view.

With series stories, such as James Bond or The Saint, it doesn't matter when the ending is read, because even before starting we already know that the hero is going to survive and win. (On one of Wayne and Schuster's comedy records, they do a mock adventure story sketch in which the hero gets into a mess from which there seems no escape. At that point he says, "But I'm the hero, I have to survive." To which his partner replies, "Oh no, you don't. This isn't a series, just one little old LP.") For Paul the knowledge that the hero will not die means he can take the risk of identifying with him. It's safe. James Bond and Simon Templar will always triumph. So I too will survive. In those stories where the ending is not known there is great risk in linking our own fate too closely with that of the hero. Maybe that is another reason for looking ahead.

But the limitation of such series is at exactly the same point. The fact that the hero will always triumph keeps the stories from being taken seriously. And if it is what makes the hero safe to identify with, it is also what makes identification difficult. Bond and Templar are always smooth, always smiling, always looking good, always victorious. How can I, with my doubts and struggles, identify with that? My own life has some hopes attached to it, but little certainty.

Another support for using any order the reader chooses is given by Ingarden (1973) in his observation that the objects portrayed in a text gain a different order from the sequence used in the text. People, events and objects are organized and seem in the reader's mind in a different order from that in which they are told or described. The writing has to be linear to some degree, but the reader's understanding does not.

And when the text, in whatever order, is ended, what then? What is the experience of coming to the end?

> With a really good book I have this terrible conflict when the ending comes because I want to see some closure in terms of the story, but I don't want the book to end. And I certainly have experienced with some stories a tremendous sadness because it's over and you know you can't pick up that book again. Not in the same way you did the first time.

For Yvonne the arrival at the last page of a book involves the sense of separation that comes with any parting and the ambivalence that is common to separations. On the one hand there is a desire for the conclusion of one phase, a sense of completion and an impetus to move on to something else; but simultaneously there is regret at having to let go, to leave a world, in this case the world of the text, in which I have participated and which contains people whose association I want to keep. But the text, like life itself, pushes me ever onward. There is no stopping here, no more sheltering under the umbrella of the story-world. It is, of course, possible to re-read the book and to recapture some of the pleasure, but as Yvonne indicates, it's different. It will now be a conscious going back to something known and enjoyed, not a striding forward with risk-taking vulnerability to new experiences.

But even if it's not quite the same, to re-read is one way to extend the experience and live in the world of the text a little longer. At the very least, re-reading makes the breaking off from the text more gradual and less painfully sudden. "Nina had finished the journal Sunday night. And because she couldn't bear it to be finished, started all over again, seeing ever more deeply into Odile and her feelings for K" (Cameron, 1968, p. 89). The seeing more deeply and understanding better is a chief benefit of re-reading, but that is not always the purpose in starting. It's that bitter-sweet feeling that we can't "bear it to be finished." Naturally we do not wish to see the end of a world in which we have lived happily. If the text world were about to be destroyed, it would be painful for us. The saving grace is the knowledge that, although we can't enter it in quite the same way again, it is still there and we can revisit or recommend it to friends. But we have to reassure ourselves of all that. In the moment of running out of text, there is still the distinct sense of loss.

Jeff feels a similar reluctance to let go, but his desire for "this new world to go on," is more specifically focused on those texts which create a community he has joined.

> Every now and again I read a book that I don't really want to end. I have that feeling in reading Tolkien. I didn't want to finish Lord of the Rings. In fact, I don't know if I did finish it. I know how it ends. I've read all but the last eight to ten pages probably. I remember that I didn't want to see the breakup of the fellowship. In a sense I know that that's what had to happen, but I didn't want to be a part of it. It was inevitable, but I loved the book so much that I didn't want to see it happen.

This sense of participating in a fellowship points up one of the paradoxes of reading. Reading is essentially a solitary activity best done by one person in a quiet room, but the experience of reading is frequently the alleviation of loneliness, the moving into a fellowship. And if the ending of the story shows the fellowship dissolving, the reader can never return to it without being influenced by that knowledge. Also, the dissolution gives a foreboding of the loneliness encroaching again.

But a wise author is able to let a reader go at the end. That may be as much a part of writing well, as is catching the reader's attention at the beginning. For Yvonne that is important.

> I think at the end of a good novel there is a psychological resolution of some sort, more than just a resolution of conflict in the story. There is a peacefulness. The author lets you go. If the author ensnared you at the beginning, then it seems to me there is a letting go.

Part of the letting go is in the presentation of a story that illuminates our lives, that does not produce a sense of jarring irrelevance, but that can be brought back into my life as an integral part of it.

And, for all the reluctance we feel to be faced with the end of a good story and for all the delaying tactics we can employ along the way, readers do find a certain satisfaction in the final pages of a text. Reading any story involves succumbing to an eagerness to find out what comes next. We want to know "what happens," and "what happens after that" and finally "how it comes out." This is a western culture pattern, which is not shared for example in Indian or Innuit stories where there is no building up of suspense to a final resolution (Egoff, 1975). But for us, it is important that the story come out "right." And a right ending involves going in the direction we have been led to expect with a twist (usually of lemon) from the author to make available to us any subtleties, such as those of symbols, that we may have missed. That is, the dialogue has a trend, so the ending must take us down the road we thought all along that we were on, but the author is welcome to put a little bend in the road and give a bit of surprise. Thus, as noted above, Jeff says of the ending to Lord of the Rings, "I knew it had to happen. . . . It was inevitable." He didn't happen to like it, but that didn't keep him from recognizing that it was "right." However, Jeff also notes that

> sometimes the writer saves the final surprise so that ideas don't fully come together until the very end. I have thought I was fully understanding the message that the writer was pointing toward, and then all of a sudden in just the last page or two I've seen that the message, the truth, had really been slightly escaping me and I'd not really been fully appreciating what the writer was trying to say until the very end. By this I'm not referring to mystery reading, like gimmicky endings; that's a different kind of thing altogether. I'm thinking more in terms of a book like Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance. I thought I knew what the book was all about because I had a sense of the main theme developing, but I had no sense at all of the tragedy that was underneath everything that had been said in the story. It wasn't until I came to the end that I realized the tragedy, and then everything said earlier had to be re-interpreted. In terms of that hidden kind of message, that wasn't revealed until the end. It's not until you see the whole that you can really understand what the work is about.

Jeff recognizes the contradiction in his statements of saying on the one hand that he occasionally doesn't quite finish a story and on the other hand that the story can't be fully understood apart from the ending. He admits he may be missing some final surprise by not reading the last few pages of Lord of the Rings, but says he was completely satisfied with the story as he had experienced it and felt no need to attend to the ending. The contradiction may be more apparent than real. For the story in question makes a differences. Some stories have unexpected or particularly powerful endings that really are a sudden twist of the tale and strongly influence our understanding of the whole story—as Jeff has just illustrated. They build to a crescendo and final crash of strong chords. But other stories wind down gradually, almost drift to a close. The impact of the story is also made subtly and gradually throughout and the end in a diminuendo. We know what the last soft notes must be whether or not we hear them clearly. And we also know as we approach the ending which stories are likely to be which.

Besides, in Jeff's view, some authors take the attitude that "life doesn't have endings as books have endings, so let's not take them too seriously." Easier said than done, however. And with stories, not always good advice.

Some novels are raced through merely to get to the end. These tend to be light-hearted tales, the reading of which is similar to watching a TV situation-comedy, relaxing probably, fun possibly, but not at all compelling. And in the end somewhat disappointing, precisely because we felt no involvement, no reflection of our own world or experience. We find endings most satisfying when the book has been so fascinating that we have almost procastinated finishing it. Readers speak of such actions as reading a few pages and stopping to day-dream, of wondering where a certain character or symbol was introduced and going back to look, of liking a particular description or sequence so much that "I re-read it several times; it seemed so apt and true to my experience," or of finding the text peaceful and "slowing down my reading to feel the calm and tranquility myself." When the text presents us with a world that appeals as resonant of real life, it is understandable that we should want to stay in it as long as possible and that we should find the ending illuminating both for insight into the whole text and for reflection upon our own experience.

And sometimes we can stay in it. For only some texts stop. With others the dialogue continues after reading. "Sometimes when I'm reading I'm only getting the overt significance of what has happened, but later on upon reflection things spring forward and a whole new meaning arises." Alice's experience often occurs to readers. If the text has really made an impression of me, it mulls around in my mind, forming and reforming itself. Some details fade, others emerge from different parts of the text and link themselves together. A bowl of flowers with petals falling described near the end becomes a symbol for a portrayal near the beginning of a comfortable way of life about to be disrupted. And in the linking the meaning of both flowers and pre-revolutionary life changes. Part of the pleasure of reading is in that process of integrating the text afterwards. "It is usually after reading has finished that creative thinking may take place, and new ideas may be engendered" (Jenkinson, 1962, p. 4). Other readers concur.

> Doug: Lots of different things can happen to the reading after you finish the text. Some things I promptly forget. But otherwise, the meaning changes in some way. Sometimes the meaning can be exactly opposite to what I originally thought. Sometimes it's just a matter of more insight. Sometimes it's a matter of perspective, of broadening the view. It seems to me all sorts of things can happen. It's shaped a lot by other factors: do I have to use it somewhere?

> did I have time to follow an idea? did the idea talk loudly enough in the first place? is there a reason for it to stay in my mind? But with some passages or some texts, the reading never ends.

> Ian: When I'm reading there's a sense of moving into a new realm. At the same time there's a going back between what I'm reading and the things I've already read. What I'm reading now has a sense of projection into the future, but is very much tied to the past. That which I read in the past is changing because of what I'm reading now. There's constant reinterpretation of what I've read in what I'm reading now. So in that sense the meaning of the text to me is constantly changing. Even when I read the last page and put the book down, the meaning is still changing. As I take up the book again at some future point, I'm constantly changing so I see it in that light. I find fascinating that sense of living with what the author has said. In a sense it's growing older together, I suppose.

In the moving vantage point Ian describes, divisions like past and present become inappropriate. Out of the changing and modifying interpretation and reinterpretation, text influences text and text influences life. Any text may be modified by another read later, so that it is not possible to say that one text has its fixed and final interpretation. Also a text may continue the reading dialogue by its effect on me and my life—an aspect important to Cathy:

> In a sense I suppose a text is finished when I close the book, but it's not finished inside of me. If it's had an impact on me, it's something that I think about and ponder, go back to again. It's never finished. It's part of who I am.

The phrases used by these readers: "With some texts the reading never ends," "It's growing older together," "It's part of who I am," show the very strong and lasting impact they perceive reading to have on their imaginations and their lives. That points out the importance of what is read and accepted, and shows also the continual impulse toward making sense and unity, and hence, integrity in our lives.

Seeking Unity

The understanding that is necessary for such wholeness emerges in two aspects of time: that which occurs during the reading as it flows along, and that which comes together afterward to form a new kind of unity. Ingarden identifies the two phases in general terms:

> first, the reading of a specific literary work, or the cognition of that work which takes place during such reading, and second, that cognitive attitude which leads to an apprehension of the essential structure and peculiar character of the literary work of art as such. (1973, p. 10)

Frye also distinguishes between the passage of time during the reading of a text and the wholistic consideration of it afterwards, but gives a fuller description of these phases:

> While we are reading a poem or listening to a play on the stage, we are participating in a linear narrative: this linear participation is essentially pre-critical. Once finished, the poem or play tends to freeze into a single simultaneous unity. This sense of simultaneous unity is what is symbolized by 'recognition,' which may be a crucial point in the play towards the end or some crucial emblematic image, like a scarlet letter or a golden bowl, and which is usually indicated in the title. It is in this sense of total comprehension of structure, or 'verbal icon,' that the critic can begin. (1969, p. 5)

In an earlier essay (1963) Frye described the first response as "direct experience of the work itself, while we're reading a book or seeing a play, especially for the first time. This experience is uncritical, or rather pre-critical, so it's not infallible" (p. 44). This response is frequently described by readers in terms of their enjoyment of the text as they read.

> Jeff: It's the language, the imagery, the characters, the day by day page by page things you read about. I savour the experience as I go along.

> Yvonne: A shared insight with the writer seems to me to be fairly instantaneous; as soon as the idea is read or the phrase decoded, the insight is there almost instantly. The meaning

> may be at a very inarticulate level. But there is that flash of recognition.

The phrase which leaps off the page and lands full-blown in the reader's mind is difficult to illustrate because it varies so much from one reader to another. A turn of phrase that seems so apt to one person may seem rather ordinary to another. And to quote such a phrase out of context reduces its vivacity also. The reader must be willing to attend carefully, think, and become involved before this can be expected. But one of the delights of reading is suddenly coming across a detail or picture or expression that is striking. They catch us unawares, and that knowledge that a little gem can pop up at any second during the reading adds greatly to the pleasure. Sometimes the expression needs mulling over and it improves with consideration. Other times, as Yvonne says, it comes in a flash.

Yvonne's awareness that this response may be fairly inarticulate and Jeff's picture of "savouring" the experience, drifting along in it, both illustrate Frye's view of this experience as "precritical." It is not that critical and thorough assessments of the text cannot be made or will not be made. It's that this is not the time for them. First I must have the experience, experience the text, before I have anything to be reflective or critical about. Iser in discussing the sense we have as readers of moving along through the text observes that Henry Fielding in Tom Jones and Sir Walter Scott in Waverley both use a metaphor comparing the reader to a traveler in a stage-coach. The traveler "has to make the often difficult journey through the novel, gazing out from his moving viewpoint. Naturally, he combines all that he sees within his memory and establishes a pattern of consistency, the nature and reliability of which will depend partly on the degree of attention he has paid during each phase of the journey. At no time, however, can he have a total view of that journey." During the act of comprehension with its "moving viewpoint," the whole work is not available to the reader, so the reader must build in consistency (Iser, 1978, p. 16). To the extent that the reader follows the trend of the dialogue, the consistency building is very helpful in compiling a composite. But the reader must be careful. Characters, stories and texts are not necessarily totally consistent. Nor is the reader's thinking. Also, being too consistent, and therefore very predictable, is the mark of a stereotyped story. So the reader must be responsive to the trend and alert to the variations as the reading goes on.

The second form of response happens at the end of or after a reading when a "simultaneous unity" occurs. Time is made irrelevant as all parts of the text influence each other in the reader's mind and become a unity. There is a kind of circle of understanding operating here so that the ending, or perhaps a reference to a symbol or a particular metaphor used (the "verbal icon"), illuminates an earlier part of the text which then sheds more light on the later text itself and out of the circularity emerges a richer, fuller interpretation.

However, it is at precisely this point of unity that a major problem in reading can occur. If the "simultaneous unity" does not form, serious misinterpretations are likely. Sometimes because of a text's length or complexity or the reader's limited knowledge about the topic of the text, the reader will make a very incomplete or inadequate interpretation of the text. The text does not become a unity but remains a series of bits. Time is not suspended since each piece of text or idea must be considered in turn. The reader is thus reduced to thinking about or discussing words, sentences or paragraphs separately without being able to interpret them from the viewpoint of the whole text. Re-reading will facilitate synthesis of some of the pieces, but if the fragmentation is severe, unity is unlikely. This segmentation will affect the reader's interpretation, since any piece of text is context dependent and to alter the context or to remove it is to change function and significance of the segment. When Dylan Thomas describes a town as "bandaged," the phrase in isolation could have a variety of meanings, including an attempt by the town to recover from a disaster, an interpretation sometimes made by readers. But taken in the whole context of a joyful celebration of Christmas and winter, it becomes apparent that "bandaged" is a metaphor for snow-covered. All the implications of the expression cannot be determined, however, unless it is integrated with its context.

When the unity does form, it has implications for the interpretations made earlier during the "moving viewpoint" of the various parts of the text, as Yvonne illustrates:

> I think it's at the end of the book where you see a coherent whole. Then it takes shape. In any good story I think it is critical what happens to a character in the story generally. Scobie in Heart of the Matter kills himself at the end. Well, I don't think you can really appreciate the book, or really understand the book, or the book has much meaning unless you take that fact into account. There's lots of foreshadowing, but it's in the last two pages that it happens. I don't see how you could have a real understanding of that character otherwise.

That situation at the end influences the interpretation of former text. It may also lead to re-reading the text in light of the ending. Sometimes the adjustments in our interpretation are readily made by thinking through the story. Other times the whole does not quite synthesize, details have been shaped in our memory by how we were interpreting at the time, and it is necessary to go back and re-read in order to sort out "what I thought" from "what the text actually said."

But the unity at the end has implications not only for interpretation of earlier parts, but also for the interpretation of the whole text, an experience Alice identifies. "When I've finished reading, what I remember is not little bits of things or progressions, but a feeling about the whole thing. And if somebody says to me, 'What was it like?' I don't answer them that this happened and that happened, I give them a feeling about the book." It's not only a matter of all the pieces of the picture falling into place, but also of a creation of a complete picture which has no pieces and is no longer divisible into parts, even though it may once have been.

Out of the gradual buildup of many impressions and partial interpretations arises an understanding that is much more than the sum of its parts, and that even allows the distant and the recent past to be equidistant. Vanauken describes this fushion in

> . . . reading a novel like David Copperfield that covers many years. In that book one follows the boy David running away to his Aunt Betsey Trotwood, the youth David loving Dora, the mature David with Agnes. While one reads, chapter by chapter, even as one lives one's own life week by week, David is what he is at that particular point in the book's time. But then, when one shuts the book at the end, all the Davids—small boy, youth, man—are equally close: and, indeed, are one. The whole David.

> One is then, with reference to the book's created time, in an eternity, seeing it all in one's own Now even as God in His eternal Now sees the whole of history that was and is and will be. (1977, p. 186)

That is part of the meaning of wholeness: not being subjected to the sequence and fragmentation of time, but being, with reference to some person or story, in an eternity. To be human is to be subject to the constraints of time, but there are specific exceptions where it is possible to break these shackles in some aspect of life. "All the Davids . . . are one. The whole David." How frequently is that wholeness available in daily experience? Reading provides the opportunity regularly. The completion of every text is an invitation to unity and wholeness. The reader will not be able to reach it with every text, but the invitation is there each time, and to the thoughtful reader the experience happens quite often. We can stand back and see the text's created time as a unity. That potential is one of the great gifts of reading.

The wholeness also involves integrity. When a text portrays anachronisms, characters acting completely out of character, illogicalities, etc., unity cannot form since the parts refuse to fit together. There are clashes and holes and disjointedness. Only when a text has integrity can it unify for the reader. And only when it has integrity, when it rings true to life as I have experienced it, can it fuse into my life and contribute to the wholeness of understanding for which I strive.

The wholeness sustained by integrity is also one verification of truth. Wholeness has implicit in it connotations of completeness and healing which are impossible without truthfulness. Partialness (incompleteness) leads to partiality (bias). Half-truths are not truth. Truth requires wholeness.

Which comes in the fullness of time. When the term is completed. When the times are right, or ripe. Wholeness and truth, like time, cannot be rushed. But they can flower in the fullness of time. Only in the willingness to let time pass can we escape the segmentation of it and approach wholeness and timelessness.

Not-time

One of our great desires as human beings is to make time stop occasionally, to escape its inexorable pressure. But so bound up are we in time that we really do not even have the language for no-time. Our statements tend to emerge in absurdities like, "We want time to stop, if only for a moment." We can, if we are fortunate, experience occasional moments of stillness, in which time and world seem at rest. Jeff speaks of reading a particular text which gives "a marvellous feeling of stillness. Time stands still. You get this remarkable feeling that you're standing outside of time. Outside of time, and outside of all the concerns that bother us day by day." Two qualities of time are suggested here: stillness and a freedom from daily concerns. Both are virtually impossible to achieve. Occasionally we manage a few moments of stillness—almost no motion or sound. It is necessary to say "almost," since life seems to involve sound and motion. But the stillness may be intense enough to make an impact—to echo loudly—even if it is brief and not quite total. Freedom from daily concerns is also experienced in short intervals when the attention is wholly absorbed by something very pleasant, such as being lost in a marvellous text. Our steps outside of time are brief. ("Brief"—a time word. Is there really any step outside?) The common phrase "time out" is another manifestation of this desire. In sports talk, a time out allows the players to step outside the game; it "stops the clock" and thereby gives respite. We each have our own private pictures of idyllic moments which provide a brief escape, and usually they involve doing nothing—lying on the grass watching the clouds go by, sitting on the shore listening to the waves roll in. But these moments are made bittersweet by the knowledge that no matter how perfect they may be, they will soon end. The day will wane, responsibilities will call us, work awaits. Perhaps daydreams and images are so precious to us because they are time-free. We can call them up at will, we can shape them to please ourselves, in them we can be whatever age we wish to be in whatever era or condition. In them there is no such thing as time.

Time or history is the medium of definite thought, but silence or eternity moves one beyond that to more difficult thinking (Sontag, 1964). Very much more difficult. But in thinking, satisfaction is commensurate with difficulty.

Frye suggests a force, perhaps the only force, strong enough to take on time and make a stand. "If even time, the enemy of all living things, and to poets, at least, the most hated and feared of all tyrants, can be broken down by the imagination, anything can be" (1963, p. 33). A very good reason to examine the power and influence of the imagination in human life. And reading is an area of life which not only involves the imagination, but which provides excellent ground for imagination to challenge time and perhaps to work with it, as much as to take it on. Imagination is also the avenue by which Sontag's "difficult thinking" and not-time may be sought.

If the present is structured by the past, it is also pressured by the future. We have always the awareness that the present, however idyllic, cannot last but is bound to give way to the future. And the future brings an ending. Only if awareness of the future and endings can be escaped can the present have a vestige of timelessness. Is that possible? Vanauken, writing after his wife's death, talks about their great happiness together and how in their intense desire to prolong the happiness they felt pressured by time.

> . . . we had spoken of 'moments made eternity,' meaning what are called timeless moments, moments precisely without the pressure of time—moments that might be called, indeed, timeful moments. Or time-free moments. And we had clearly understood that the pressure of time was our nearly inescapable awareness of an approaching terminus—the bell about to ring, the holiday about to end, the going down from Oxford foreseen. We had dreamed of Grey Goose [their boat] as a way to escape the pressure of time, though no one escapes entirely. Life itself is pressured by death, the final terminus. Socrates refused to delay his own death for a few more hours: perhaps he knew that those few hours under the pressure of time would be worth little. When we speak of Now, we seem to mean the timeless: there is no duration. Awareness of duration, of terminus, spoils Now. (1977, p. 200)

Now is the only time that actually exists and paradoxically the only chance we have for timelessness. And so, the present moment becomes the fullness of time. A rich understanding of time requires a grasp of the idea of not-time as well. Is a fish aware that water is not the only possible environment? Are we equally bound in time? Finiteness exists within infinity, time within eternity. Each must be understood against its absence, which is something much greater than itself.

> Wild geese, suspended
> Float in mid-air stillness, thus
> Time rests in not-time.
> (Heider, 1965, p. 28)

The geese are mere specks in the broad reach of the sky. Is our time an equally small part of not-time? Reading gives an opportunity to experience time in various ways, to start the difficult but significant thinking, to get a glimpse of not-time.

Time and Time

—save time, make time, kill time, buy time, waste time

—work time, play time, my time, our time

—such a time, what a time, have a good time

—the right time, the wrong time, this time, next time

—enough time, short of time, too much time, no time

—time out, time off

—thanks for your time

World time

—ambivalence, continuation or completion

—order as desired

—fellowship finally broken, but

—the dialogue continues

Endings

—oneness, rings, links, circles

—integrity, no double-faced Janus

—to know the truth and be set free

—in the fullness of time

Unity

—a singing silence

—stretch the imaginative limits

—step outside the boundaries

—fingertips edging infinity

Not-time

Chapter VI

STORIES AND OTHER STRUCTURES

Revelation

We make ourselves a place apart
Behind light words that tease and flout,
But oh, the agitated heart
Till someone really find us out.

'Tis pity if the case require
(Or so we say) that in the end
We speak the literal to inspire
The understanding of a friend.

But so with all, from babes that play
At hide-and-seek to God afar,
So all who hide too well away
Must speak and tell us where they are.
(Robert Frost, 1972, p. 9)

That is what text is: the voice of someone hidden well away, the speaking of the invisible person, the asking of the absent to be heard and understood. Sometimes the text speaks literally. But there are other ways of communicating. And various forms in which the text can present itself. That is part of the message. Different texts call out in different ways and initiate their own dialogues. A story, just because it is a story, speaks differently than a poem or a lecture, for example. And readers must respond according to the language in which the text speaks. Here personal preferences emerge. Some readers are oriented toward one type of text, so that for example they read primarily for technical or other information, or perhaps they usually read stories for enjoyment and relaxation; other readers are more eclectic in their tastes. But as Frost says, we do deeply desire to be found out, in whatever form. Both authors and readers wish to inspire understanding. And so we speak because we are unable to keep silent. The story must be told, the lecture given, or responded to.

Silence is impossible, it ends in further words. But it is that very language that makes meaning out of life (Merleau-Ponty, 1964b). There are so many words, so many ways to give voice to experience. And so many things to say—"never mind of what actual worth." Sometimes we are too inarticulate, unable to find the words that would foster understanding; and perhaps sometimes we are too articulate, possessed of too many words with not enough substance.

> She [Jill] knew how worrying, even how agonizing sometimes, the questions of grown-ups can be to children, whose capacity for experience so far outstrips their capacity for talking about it; and in after life it's the other way around, thought Jill—adult and educated folks seemed to experience so little of any consequence, and yet to say such a vast and wearisome amount about it. (Goudge, 1948, p. 292)

Wise counsel here for teachers to remember that there is in children, and sometimes in adults, a certain inarticulateness about profound experience. Even those children who are chatterboxes may have difficulty voicing the questions that really trouble them.

Of the many forms available for reaching out, one of the most powerful and most enjoyable is that of stories.

Stories

Is there anyone who does not enjoy stories? From infancy onward we are steeped in stories and endlessly fascinated by them: fairy tales, family events, myths, daily anecdotes, legends, jokes, classics, romance, fables, mysteries, biographies, westerns, dramas, sports accounts, family history, examples, adventures . . . and all sorts of mixtures. There is: "Once upon a time . . .," "I remember when . . .," "Did you hear the one about . . .," "A funny thing happened on the way to . . ." Watch children's eyes sparkle to "Far away in a magic land there lived a . . .," old men draw their chairs in closer with "Do you remember the winter of . . .," or a parent report "Guess what our little Samantha did today . . ." Those opening lines have become so familiar precisely because of their general appeal; they signal that yet another story is on the way.

What is the attraction of stories? What do we experience with them that gives us such an insatiable appetite for more? It seems that every human society that ever existed has had its stories; even though they differ greatly in structure and content and may be oral or written, they are still stories that are widely enjoyed. Stories typically deal with human personality or personifications in action with others or with the environment. And people are forever interested in people and what happens to them. From the most superficial gossip and people-watching to the most profound insights into the human heart, we are, each of us, very much "involved in mankind." And we will turn again and again for another look at the beings we and our neighbours are.

Also, stories not only allow, but encourage, multiple responses. Each of us is invited to understand and interpret as best we may. For example, one Christmas a family, parents, child and grandmother, were gathered in their livingroom watching on television the very familiar movie version of Charlotte's Web. Four-year-old Beth was sitting on the sofa, nestled in the curve of her father's arm, eyes enormous with absorption in the story. At the point in the story when the farmer decided that Wilber had to be sent away, the TV station naturally chose that crisis to insert a commercial. There was a few seconds pause in the room while the total implications for Wilber were worked out in a four-year-old mind, then a very sudden and very loud bursting into tears. Through the wailing, Beth's father said calmly into her ear, "Don't cry, Babe; it's not over yet. This is only a commercial." The noise stopped instantaneously. Apart from the fact that no adult could ever turn the tears on and off like that, what happened? None of the adults felt like crying at that point. And Beth's father's words carried no real promise, but apparently she already knew enough about story structure to understand that he was offering hope. All of them watched the rest of the movie with keen interest. Beth did not join in the adult laughter at Templeton's greedy manipulations. But she was satisfied with, and released by, the ending of the story. What does a four-year-old understand of the troubles of Wilber, the machinations of Templeton, the inspired love of Charlotte, and the human allegory? For that matter, what did Beth's elders see? Beth's father makes his living raising and marketing pigs. Her grandmother, now sixty years old, has lived all her life in the city and has not found life particularly easy. No magic webs to rescue her. The story, by adult standards is charming but rather cute. Who was impressed by what? What other form of speaking besides a story, what lecture for example, could have held the attention of all four people and given each some understanding?

Stories make available many possible interpretations. Sartre's view (discussed in the re-reading section) is that a story is written on several levels and a reader can respond on any of them. All sorts of factors in the reader—age, personal background, current interests, maturity, personality—will determine the level at which the reader is capable of understanding. And these change over time, so that in re-reading a story, we often respond differently than we did initially. But the same variation in response is available for different readers. So Beth, her parents and grandmother, can each enjoy a story, each make a personal interpretation, and each let the story make an impact on them or shrug it off casually. It is likely that the richness of understanding and the thoroughness of interpretation varied considerably from person to person in this case, given their differing ages, backgrounds and interests. "You can only get from a reader what he has to give by way of comprehension; there are always lots of surprises in this process for an author" (Brown, cited by Gibson, 1975, p. 458). But stories, more than any other form of writing cast a very wide net. T. S. Eliot writes that "Huckleberry Finn, like other great works of imagination, can give to every reader whatever he is capable of taking from it" (1980, p. 273).

Huckleberry Finn is an excellent example since it can be read in a host of ways, according to its reader: as an adventure story that allows us to dream of running away and having a delicious, exciting time, as an amusing historical tale, as an examination of sociological issues such as slavery and care of orphans, as a vivid portrayal of human character, as a river of life analogy, etc. or some combination of these and other possibilities. There is an excellent opportunity to see society and its values afresh, for Huck willingly lends us his eyes. Eliot points out that adults look at Tom Sawyer with a smile and an attitude of boys-will-be-boys, but: "Huck do we not look at—we see the world through his eyes" (p. 267). The themes of the novel, on whatever level it is interpreted, cannot be ascertained or understood apart from Huck's character and his way of seeing. The story is the message, and the style of the book is the style of Huck. Good stories have always been this way. The story is the point. It is possible to debate with another reader about exactly how the message is to be interpreted and how the emphasis is to be placed; that is part of the space which the story allows the reader. Space to interpret and space to choose the level—two real attractions of stories.

For an author to start with a message and try to slip it into a story is like trying to deceive a child with a honey-coated pill and usually works just about as well. Those who start out zealously spreading a cause and then make up a story to convey it usually tell very poor stories. But the problem is not the presence of a message. All good stories have messages, ideas about character, politics, commitment, values, ideals . . . to show us and to ask us to think about. The problem comes when we try—and succeed in—separating story and message. As the story unfolds and the characters live out their lives, the issues arise, as they do in life. Good art lets us find our own message. But that does not mean that we as readers have a preconcived message in mind and bring it to the story; that is every bit as artificial and inappropriate as the author superimposing the message. Rather by a thoughtful consideration of the story we see through it. Just as any well-composed picture guides (but not forces) the eye toward a focus, so the story gives direction but no pressure. As with Huckleberry Finn, stories can be very powerful messages.

Nancy gives another example of story and message as one.

> Delderfield's All My Days is set in a boarding school in Britain. One of the interesting aspects is where the story begins and ends. When this man goes to take a job teaching at the school, he has just come from Flanders Fields and here's the headmaster looking at the photograph of the rugby team and talking about the number of boys on the photograph who've been killed. And it ends during the Battle of Britain when the boys who've been there the last few years are most of them dead or injured. So the theme is obvious from where the story begins and where it ends, about the futility, the failure of people to realize. But it doesn't harp on it all the way through; that's what's clever about it.

In this case part of the message is conveyed simply by the point at which the story stops. It has come full cycle. That there is a cycle is already part of the message.

Lever supports this story-as-message and message-as-story view by suggesting that "the novelist is conveying reality through design" (1961, p. 31). She further quotes Joyce Cary: "Your form is your meaning, and your meaning dictates your form. But what you try to convey is reality—the fact plus the feeling, a total complex experience of a real world" (p. 30).

Doug applies the same idea to the realm of daily experience:

> I've run into a number of things recently that make me look at narrative as a major way of making sense of what goes on around us. When we talk about an experience we've had, we tell it as story which shapes it and makes sense of it. It's a major strategy we use. I recently read somewhere that narrative will eventually unlock the deepest secrets of the human mind. I've begun to think that there may be something very basic and vital in the make-up of our brains that helps us deal with stories much more naturally than with other forms.

In non-literate societies, stories were told and retold not only as entertainment, but also to retain and perpetuate the truths, ideals, and values held by the culture. Myths and legends were important not as facts or literal explanations of past events, but as illustrations of relationships, values and beliefs held to be important. The truths went much deeper than mere facts. And while this pattern may be easier to observe in cultures which rely on oral tradition, it is also true for written tradition. Homer's Iliad or the Icelandic sagas are not conveying facts so much as letting a good story speak. Lever quotes Faulkner as saying that the writer's interest is in "truth and the human heart," and that ". . . in my opinion ideas and facts have very little connection with the truth" (1961, p. 31).

Doug remembers an incident during university registration in which an Indian student from the North West Territories and the person who had to sign her program form were holding a very confused discussion. The counselor said she had to take a literature course and she protested that she had taken one last year. But she kept pointing to a history credit on her transcript. The counselor eventually realized that she was not distinguishing between history and literature. That view has a certain logical appeal. Both history and literature are interpretations of life and events, both deal in issues and views that someone or some group believed important and valid, both invite interpretation and reaction by their readers, both are the stories of our culture and way of life, both attempt to communicate truth as best perceived by the writers. Blurring of the two particularly occurs in the area of intellectual history.

The suggestion that possibly history could be read as literature or vice versa implies responsibilities for readers as well as the writer. If the message of a text is subtle and integral, the reader must be willing and able to see it. Jeff points out some limitations of most modern writers.

> Good art requires a good viewer. A good writer is one who writes on several levels. He's telling a story to be enjoyed, but he may also be exploring some things that are really of concern to him. If the reader is going to enter into a dialogue with the writer at that level, then the writer has to assume that the reader is bringing something to the book, other than just attention. The writer has to assume that the reader has some kind of background in biblical literature or whatever. I suppose some writers make fantastic demands on readers in terms of knowledge of classical antiquity or whatever it might be, but decreasingly so in the twentieth century. I doubt if there are many writers in English now who make extensive demands on the readers' knowledge of Greek or Norse myths. If modern writers want to reach a modern mass audience, they have to find modern symbolism.

One of the most fascinating aspects of reading literature is to see the richness of the references, allusions and metaphors across texts and centuries. But the seeing is entirely up to the reader. And that requires enough familiarity with the original to recognize it in another context. Experience outside the text must be brought to the reading encounter—as it must be brought by the writer who makes the allusions.

Alice is intrigued by another difference she sees in the structure of modern novels:

> Some books are very linear, like Looking for Mr. Goodbar. It was very linear in concept anyway. Then at the end you had a feeling about the girl and her life and the meaning of it. But as it was going on it was really itemized little episodes. I find a lot of modern novels are like that. For me. Maybe it's that I don't remove myself from them. I just keep reading, not standing back looking at it. The story almost seems to be in pieces so that I don't pick out a relationship or get continuity

> until I'm done, and then I say, 'Oh, that was that.' It's almost like putting a puzzle together at the end. I don't think modern novelists construct their novels from the point of view of plot. Even Faulkner. I was struck by that disjointed quality that you really did not know what was going on, who was talking, until things got along further. So there was no reading for plot.

This episodic style is very convenient in stories that are likely to be read in snatches during a few minutes waiting time here and there, for example. Then style fits circumstances. And certainly not all modern texts are episodic.

How is the experience of reading an episodic story different from that of reading a more flowing text? With a sustained story such as I Heard the Owl Call My Name, we are drawn into the story, into its world, its rhythms, its way of life. And having entered that world we are likely to stay as long as possible—we really want to stay. An external interruption such as a ringing telephone may abruptly drag us out, or we may partially surface during a lull in the pacing of the story, and in any case we must finally leave our new found land usually with great reluctance when the story ends. But if we like the story enough to submit wholeheartedly to it, then we will ourselves to remain within its world. With episodic text this immersion is less likely to be sustained. The abrupt terminations or shifts have the effect of tugging us sharply from one scene to another. With some texts we simply get dropped into the middle of a new situation. Like waking up in an unfamiliar room, there is the need to look around and find some answer to "Where am I?" There is nothing gentle or subtle about these shifts. Each abruptness requires an effort to get back in, to become re-established in the world of the text, and hence there is the opportunity, almost the impetus, to slip out of the world of the text and be lost to it, at least temporarily.

With flowing text, there is the gradually increasing familiarity with the characters and their situation. This has a real life quality to it, like moving into a new community and gradually becoming acquainted with it and its people. We lose the sense of strangeness and belong, as we do when we build up relationships in real life. By contrast reading episodic text is, as Alice commented, more like putting a jigsaw puzzle together. We find a piece, see where it fits, and snap it into place. That puzzle-solving aspect makes the reading somehow a little more of a game to be played and less of a new world in which to really live.

And here we find a paradox. If the world of the text is genuine and life-like, but different than our day-by-day world, they seem two separate realities. We can move back and forth, but there is something of a gulf between them. In solving the puzzle, however, we move only partially, not totally, into another world. The absorption is not complete, so that part of us stays at home in the chair and remains aware that this is just a game. No gulf. So the logical implication seems to be that the episodic text is closer to real life. But not so. Playing a game is, after all, a digression, a time-out, from the serious purposes and pursuits in life. The new and smoothly flowing world is, however, similar to what we would expect to experience if we physically lived in it. And therefore, much more real and much closer to our own world. Characters may move back and forth as Yvonne suggests when she speaks of having a cup of tea with them or Jeff when he says he has met Lady Glencora. Even if we have never been to British Columbia, Kingcome Inlet is a real place and we know how it looks. That is part of the power of such texts. Their worlds and people are fictional, but real. ("Fiction is concerned with the real but not the actual," Lever, 1961, p. 21.) And we have learned to respect the real.

This experience of reality does not preclude fantasy or other imaginative stories, however. Perhaps they have their own reality? Nancy and Jeff both have strong views on this issue. First Nancy:

> I read Tolkien or books about gnomes, but in another world from that in which I read, for example, autobiography. That is, from the beginning I look for allegory instead of realistic physical details. Look at the impact Lord of the Rings has had. The fascinating thing about stories such as those by Tolkien is that people know they are imaginary, but they trigger the imagination because they have elements of the real world which are problematic to people at certain stages. People don't read Tolkien as escapism. Rather what I feel they do is make appropriate parallels between his world and ours. See Lord of the Rings has been around a long time. But I think it became popular when it did and became almost a college cult because some of the characters have feelings of alienation. The students felt it was a commentary more appropriate to their world as they saw it than was the world on the other side of what they believed to be a generation gap.

In Nancy's view then Tolkien is read not as a day-dream or fantasy in which to escape from reality, but as an image of that reality and an example of how to respond within it.

Jeff also comments on fantasy:

> I read it differently than I read other fiction. I spend a lot more time with the book on my lap just daydreaming. When I think of fantasy, Tolkien and Adams are in the background, and in the foreground is my latest exposure to Star Wars. What is it about fantasy? I think the human being has a real yearning after certain things: justice, seeing the good emerge, beauty, etc. They're not constructs of our culture, but part of our nature. Underlying the Star Wars craze is not the magnificent special visual effects (wonderful as they are) and not the action (which

> is very fast), but for me it's the recognition of how important beauty is, and what the Jedi knights stand for. I suppose that's what makes the King Arthur legends so important and Robin Hood legends and Middle Earth legends. There are certain ideals that these people are devoting themselves to. In *Shardik* there are the same ideals, coupled with the fallen nature of man. Keldrick's name changed as he lost his innocence and fell and then changed back again. He went from innocence to fall to redemption. That's a very Christian theme. It's not just the ideals. This sort of fiction deals so dramatically with both sides of life. There are the ideals, and also in some cases the irredeemable fall from achieving man's lot. In *The Empire Strikes Back* it becomes very clear that Darth Vadar is a fallen Jedi knight, again a biblical theme. *Star Wars* is full of the great enduring literary themes. From time to time it treats them tongue-in-cheek, but that reinforces how important they are to us. Fantasy is not at all an escape from reality. It's a way of making reality clear.

Jeff and Nancy both show that underlying the physical impossibilities in fantasy is a more crucial reality—a discussion of the themes that matter to us. By taking matters that concern us and which we are accustomed to thinking about and presenting them in a very different setting, fantasy gives us a fresh perspective. Just as a familiar object can appear quite different when placed in an unfamiliar context, so an issue with which we struggle, such as justice, can be viewed in a new way when placed in Middle Earth or outer space. The view is much clearer when we are allowed to consider the situation coolly but not required to take action. In the terms of conventional folk wisdom, we are not prevented by the trees from seeing the forest. This consideration of ethics, situations and interests is both entertainment (an interesting story) and a way of suggesting to us possibilities and consequences, of opening up various alternatives, sometimes by analogy. So as Jeff says, fantasy becomes a way of clarifying reality.

That points up one of the real attractions of stories, fantasy or otherwise. They simultaneously give us distance from our own lives and insights into them. For children also stories provide a bit of space for dealing with problems. At the very least the stories assure us that others have faced this difficulty; we have not inadvertently invented it. Looking at how someone else acted and felt does not provide a prescription for us, but may give some alternate ideas. And since we are not living out the written story, we have the space to examine the situation in various ways with more distance than we get when we are immersed in it. The details of the story will usually differ quite substantially from those of our situation; that is part of the space created for us. But we can still make applications or analogies if we wish to.

This is quite a different experience from simply reading in order to leave our own world for a short time. For that sort of momentary diversion a typical romance or mystery story will do quite nicely, precisely because they contain very predictable patterns. They are safe; we know exactly what to expect, so the mind can be almost idling. This sort of text encounter will not help us think about our own lives and will not lighten our darkness, but may for the moment, entertain, in the manner of an amusing game. And it will be forgotten just as readily. Nancy notes that "many paperbacks sell widely because they are stereotyped, but to the extent that they are stereotyped they are not memorable." It is the exceptional, the innovative, that is intriguing and worth further consideration. There is no point in trying to remember the completely predictable. But the predictable is easy and relatively effortless, precisely because it is predictable.

Force of habit saves us a great deal of decision-making and greatly eases the daily routine. In daily activities if everything is habitual life is dull, but too much uniqueness is demanding and tiring. So in reading. Occasionally, when we are tired, the predictable story is appealing for its very lack of stimulation. And with such stories we do not seek to live in the world created by the text. It's usually not a particularly admirable world. Rather we read to find out "what happens," "how it comes out," a very different experience from wanting to live and remain in the story. Heather whose health requires that she rest frequently, uses such reading to move herself away from the real concerns and interests of her life, in fact to put herself to sleep. "I'm in the habit of taking something to read when I lie down in the afternoons. Then it pretty well has to be light reading. I sort of unravel in a certain way." And so, such reading is commonly called an escape, with all that that entails of running away, of leaving behind responsibilities and work and being mindlessly free, for a short time anyway.

Lever juxtaposes this with more evocative reading: "A reader should be aware of his response to a novel because through that awareness he can distinguish between novels that seem good for ephemeral reasons and those which are good for enduring reasons" (1961, p. 58). Lever separates these two sorts of texts by differentiating between a romance and a novel. A romance is read as an escape and merely satisfies the desire for vicarious excitement; a novel, however, "transports us to a new world and returns us to ourselves and our old world with fresh insight" (p. 59). Romances do not really involve the imagination. How could they when they follow a known pattern? In Lever's terms, a novel by definition cannot be stereotyped. "The novel has from its inception been free of traditions and conventions; it is novel or it is not a novel" (p. 14). As this statement implies, a certain originality is imperative if stories are to truly have something to say to us, but traditions surround the novel as they do most everything else. And while Lever's novel/romance distinction illuminates some differences, the two cannot be considered discrete categories into which every story falls. A continuum is a more useful guideline, with Lever indicating the ends of it. And while certain qualities are most definitely intrinsic to the text, the reader also has a considerable effect on the encounter. Any text presenting ideas which are unfamiliar to the reader is novel to that particular reader.

Also, attitudes and interests we bring with us strongly affect our response to texts: "The reader who is yearning for hope or security will be in uneasy relation with a writer like Donne or Faulkner who delights in uncertainty and paradox. Those who read fiction largely out of an interest in the way man copes in the public world of social actions and manners are likely to read Kafka and Beckett with some uneasiness" (Slatoff, 1970, p. 75). So we choose those stories which appeal and our choices differ.

And yet, what is basic and fundamental in stories is the human personality, individuals living out their lives. Those emotions, struggles and joys that comprise being human remain the same across cultures and time. That is why we ultimately see ourselves even if the details differ, and that "like calling to like" is what gives stories their appeal and permits us to understand them. Those factors which differ amongst people, customs, styles, technology, can be learned about in a story. Thus a story simultaneously shows us some reflection of ourselves and broadens our horizons. For well-written stories are not merely transcriptions of life, but interpretations of it, and interpretations with hope (Buchan, 1973).

Another fascination of stories is that they are not about life, but rather they plunge us directly into it. The Chosen is not a sociological analysis of how Jewish boys are educated in New York City, nor a treatise on the variables involved in selecting a profession; rather it lets us live with Reuven and Danny, share their friendship and their education and join in their choices. The story is two boys living their way into manhood, not an analysis of the issues involved in maturation. The experience itself is there, not processed through an analytical filter.

I Heard the Owl Call My Name is not about life in a remote Indian fishing village on the B.C. coast; it is the life of a young vicar in an Indian village. We have the great good fortune of looking over his shoulder and feeling the rain, learning the meaning of the "swimmer," and especially of hearing the owl, as he does. Therein lies the power and impact of the story.

The contrast between the directness of stories and the discussion of a topic is shown by a professor of theology comparing the effect on his students of two recent guest speakers. Caleb, to whom he refers, is a retired canon who had spent his life among the coastal Indians and was greatly respected by them.

> Caleb spoke to the students last winter. The week before he came, we'd had a famous theologian whose words sent the students scurrying to their rooms to hassle half the night. But Caleb was like a cool wind from the north, or the smell of fir in the sun. No great theological problems. No debatable tenets. He spoke simply of his life on the up-coast, and often humorously. I remember watching the faces of the students as they listened, and I was sure I knew the look on the faces of the first ones who met long ago in some little hidden room in Antioch. (Craven, 1973, p. 109)

There is, of course, a place for both kinds of talk. The intellectual discussion or paper has a special interest and challenge with its own kind of excitement. But only in stories do we smell the fir trees and feel the "twinge of sudden anguish and the little, unexpected fear that precedes any big change, sad or joyous" (p. 145).

All the experiences of life are there in stories, but vicariously and safely. They give us life in a microcosm, reduced to manageable proportions, but with a satisfying completeness and complexity. For stories must be whole; it won't do to cut out sections as is often done when testing a theory.

And another very strong appeal of stories is that they have a truthful complexity, usually not apparent otherwise. Theories, for example, have a way of being neat and tidy, quite clearly laid out—until they are applied. Researchers often find that an a priori system of data analysis, derived from a theory, is very impressive, with mutually exclusive categories and arrows delineating sequences. Impressive, that is, until the data are collected and refuse to fit. Lived reality is not tidy, nor discrete, and mocks simplistic approaches. Actual living has a complexity to it that defies categorical analysis. Stories, however, carry that complexity. For example, what is the difference between a hero and a fool? Thought of abstractly and conceptually, it is easy to define each, and the differences between the two are so great that they could be posed as opposites. Heroes and fools categorize very nicely and simply in a theoretical framework. Telling them apart is no problem. But Martin remembers an incident in one of Rudy Wiebe's novels:

> These people are escaping across the border from Russia into China. It's only a small group and they know that those they left behind in their village, friends and relatives, will bear the heat of the authorities' wrath at their escape. After all the tension and the trauma, they are finally safe. At that point, the young man who is the leader of the group leaves all of them, including his wife and baby, to return to the others in the village. Ostensibly he's going to help the others escape also, but everybody knows the authorities will be able to catch him immediately. Of course, he's never heard from again. To summarize the story does it an injustice, but even if you consider the whole situation, the kind of person he is, the circumstances he lived in and its relationships, his reasons for returning, etc., you still end up asking yourself if he's a hero or a fool and what the difference is anyway.

In the novel, the text never discusses the validity or virtue of the young man's actions, but it's almost impossible to read the incident without considering the question. And it is a question. The certainty and the clear distinction of the abstraction are gone. But only in a story, whether fiction or actual, can this more intricate and dynamic relationship be revealed. Hence, the usefulness of examples to teachers or anyone else who wishes to explain a concept. And often it is the stories that appeal and are remembered more clearly than the concept they were to illustrate.

That may be a good reason for starting with the story, for letting it be the message. Each human society seems to have its great stories, its myths and legends, which are the heart of the culture, which are told and retold, thus retaining and communicating the truths and values that matter. The stories are at once entertainment and teaching, the passing on of a heritage in a form that people are eager to drink in. The young are enthralled by the newness and intrigue of the tale; the old are at ease with a return to the loved and familiar. For good stories bear repeating. When the details chosen are the right ones—not too many nor too few, but just those that let us see clearly (Buchan, 1973; Eliot, 1980), when the metaphors are apt, and the comparisons amusing, we willingly return. Stories are like friends in that we can both love the old and welcome the new.

We are not prone, or not able, to keep silent. There is too much pleasure in the communication possible through language. And of all the forms of language available, stories remain very powerful to entertain, to influence and to enthrall. In the reading of other stories and the telling of our own there is endless fascination. But other forms do have their uses and their influence.

Letters, Lectures and Other Language

Stories, of course, may be either written or told orally. Discursive text may be delivered as a formal lecture or submitted as a paper. Dialogue with a friend is normally an oral conversation, but when friends are apart, a letter is a form of conversation written and read with the image of the friend in mind. And while the substance of the story or article may be similar (although not identical) in either case, reading and listening seem to be somewhat different processes, in part because written and oral language differ. Written language is more compact, more precise, and less redundant. It not only has no hesitations and false starts, but also no facial expressions, gestures, and tones of voice. Therefore, more interpretive demands are made on the reader than on the listener. However, the reader has the important advantage of having complete control over the speed at which the language is comprehended and can speed up or slow down as desired, whereas the listener must take it as it comes. Also the reader can re-read without inconveniencing anyone else or risking embarrassment.

Formal lectures that are read from a prepared script can be difficult listening. They are frequently written language which is being presented orally. Because of the formality of the situation, listeners do not feel free to ask for a repetition of any part of the text. Thus the lecture has all the disadvantages of the oral language situation, combined with all the complexities of written language. Frequently people when leaving a lecture will comment to each other that they "really liked when the lecturer departed from the notes and just talked to us. Those were the best parts." Actually, those interjections of extemporaneous speech were examples of oral language working in its familiar format. The availability of re-reading if the mind contemplates or wanders during a reading, plus the reader's control over the speed of the incoming language account for the fact that highly literate people usually prefer to read a text rather than listen to it presented by a lecturer.

In a normal conversational context, speaker and listener have a personal relationship, whereas author and reader have usually not met each other. Thus the listener draws on personal knowledge of the speaker and the social context as an aid to interpretation of the speaker's remarks. The reader, on the other hand, is much more dependent on text cues. Jenkinson (1976) has pointed out that written language is primarily ideational, whereas oral typically includes considerable social talk which may have little ideational substance but considerable social significance.

This difference in presence or absence of a personal relationship may be illustrated by the exception. If a formal lecture tends to be written language presented orally, personal letters are usually oral language presented in writing. With such letters writer and reader have a personal relationship, so that the reader interprets the letter, not by the text only, but by personal knowledge of the writer. Also letters are usually written by simply putting down ideas and comments as they occur to us—they are talk written down. This is in direct contrast to the careful re-working of sentences and organization that is customary of a writer preparing a text for publication. And so, we often say that in reading a letter we can hear the writer's voice saying the words. I often find myself reading a letter in the cadences and phrasing with which the writer speaks, rather than at my normal reading rate. This tendency is frequently illustrated in movie portrayals of a character reading a letter, especially a note from a lover, when the recipient of the letter reads the salutation, then the voice fades out and changes to that of the writer, so that we see the reader but hear the writer.

Olson (1977) points out that written language makes possible a form of thinking and reasoning that cannot be done using oral language only. Formal essays, particularly philosophical essays of a closely reasoned type, can only be thought through when writing is available. The burden on memory is too great in oral language. Written language makes possible the examination of all the logical implications of a statement, the production and examination of a precise and careful argument. This writing encourages and aids further thought. Thus the text not only interprets itself, but assists in its own writing.

Those rather large differences between oral and written language may serve as an example of the significance of language style for the participants in a dialogue. Within written language, the form and structure of the text also affect the message and the nature of the reader-text encounter.

Text that has as its purpose the conveying of all sorts of information is not the same as text that tells a story. How does the reading experience differ?

Martin's view has to do with the world in which the reading occurs.

> Stories create a world. When I really get involved in one, I become oblivious to my surroundings and I feel myself to be in the place and era of the story. But with discursive writing that doesn't happen. I remain in the present, here and now, sitting at my desk. I may be very absorbed in the text in that I'm interested in, perhaps even fascinated by, the ideas and concepts, but there is not the same obliviousness and nothing at all of being transported elsewhere. In fact, some kinds of information text actually reinforce awareness of surroundings. When I read a weather report, I'm apt to look out the window and compare the text with what I see. Or even more, if I'm reading instructions on how to assemble something and carrying out the steps as I'm reading them, then I'm very conscious of the present—even painfully conscious of it when the project isn't going well!

The sense of moving into the world of the text, of leaving behind the actual physical world, is so common and fundamental a feature of the reading experience. Indeed, it seems that it is one of the real pleasures of reading and is eagerly welcomed by readers. It is a respite, a way of living inside our heads but rather than being selfishly wrapped up in ourselves, it allows us new vistas. But Martin suggests that this transport does not occur in the same way with discursive writing. Being intrigued by the text's talk still includes at least a lingering sense of actual context. This does not suggest that one is more or less real than the other, but rather that the power to evoke a world belongs to narratives, whereas discursive writing fleshes out and extends the world in which we already dwell.

Because this world is created, the point of reading novels is to prolong the experience, to live it, whereas with discursive writing the point is to finish the reading, retain what is useful and use it. Unless there is some external pressure (for instance, to return a borrowed book), it does not make much sense to race through stories and poems. Why rush through our pleasures? Why hurry to leave a world we enjoy? Whereas with discursive writing there is no reason to delay, especially if the ideas being expressed are already somewhat familiar. That is where rapid reading is convenient, and although ability to assimilate information quickly is a highly useful skill, we do need to slow down somewhat when ideas come along. Nevertheless, with discursive writing there is a drive toward completion, whereas with aesthetic reading it is more toward prolonging the experience. Professional reading is done for the knowledge gained, rather than for the pleasure of the process.

Stories create a dual pull. On the one hand, we want to live in the created world, on the other hand we want to know what happens and how it comes out. There is in good stories a continuity that creates ambivalence in the reader. Poems, however, are often short and soon complete. Also, they are compact with ideas embedded in metaphors and in other ideas. There is a need to proceed meditatively, to pause and to re-read.

> I like to have books of poetry around that I can pick up for fifteen minutes or so and lay down again. I like them because in a very few minutes I can have an interesting kind of contact. I'm not an ardent reader of poetry to read page after page. There are too many things I have to wrestle with, too many metaphors. But in short poems I feel enriched.

Ian expresses it well. Reading poetry does require wrestling with metaphors and other ideas. That means going slowly and stopping often. No racing across this terrain. Time is needed to let the images form in the mind, to see and hear what the poem is creating.

> Yvonne: Poetry is more personal, intimate and more profoundly shared than discursive writing ever is because it's just intellectual. Maybe the difference is that discursive writing is primarily a matter of comprehension, whereas feeling is a great part of poetry. I know it gets dicey when you start separating the two. It seems to me the eternal quality of poetry is the feeling part of it. I can read Chaucer and laugh or cry. Although the context is changed, I think probably people still feel much the same as they did back then in certain very basic life situations. And act the same. But it would be very different from reading an astrologer's notebook from the fourteenth century. I wouldn't be able to share that in the way I can share Chaucer because we've learned so much since then, we've debunked astrology. Good poetry can be timeless. But say you read a medical textbook of the sixteenth century. Your only interest would be curiosity. It would be different reading Shakespeare's plays which you wouldn't read just as a history of plays back then.

The state of knowledge changes in a field of study, particularly in the sciences, but human emotion and character remain. Information becomes dated, but the "basic life situations" and our responses to them remain. So we can join with Chaucer's people; we know them. In the characters in stories, from whatever era, we see something of ourselves and our faults, for there is a bit of the character in us. And so there is much more risk in reading stories than in reading discursive writing. "Informative writing requires less effort to assimilate than does fiction, because good fiction asks the reader to feel" (Davies, 1961, p. 13). We do not have to risk ourselves to understand information, but personal involvement is necessary in understanding stories and poems.

One facet of the timelessness is that the human patterns and emotions recur. "The poet's job is not to tell you what happened, but what happens: not what did take place, but the kind of thing that always does take place" (Frye, 1963, p. 24). The part that remains, the kind of thing that always takes place is the human emotion and response. But that does not mean that what we read will be familiar or easy or apparent to us.

> Good poetry makes demands on its readers because it presents us with our habitual ways of seeing and thinking and valuing. But good poetry rewards by renewing our awareness of reality, by opening up our perceptions and imaginations, by extending our field of experiences. (Warren, 1980, p. 18)

Reading poetry can be difficult, the demands are high. But the three benefits Warren enumerates are very substantial: renewed awareness of reality, enriched perception and imagination, and extended experience. Poetry is a magnificient achievement of language. The poetry is in the language, the words put together in just the right way.

> If we're writing to convey information, or for any practical reason, our writing is an act of will and intention: we mean what we say, and the words we use represent the meaning directly. It's different in literature, not because the poet doesn't mean what he says too, but because his real effort is one of putting words together. What's important is not what he may have meant to say, but what the words themselves say when they get fitted together. (Frye, 1963, p. 38)

To change the words is to change the poem. In other words, there are no "other words." And not even the poet can lay claim to making a full and complete interpretation of the poem. When the poem is written the author's intention fades away, and the interpretation of it is a matter for the reader-text encounter.

In scientific writing the sign used is arbitrary and as denotative as possible. But in literary language the sign is connotative and cannot be altered without also altering what it represents. All of the literary language, the meter, the alliteration, the patterns of sound support and convey the symbol (Wellek, 1942).

Pat's great enjoyment of poetry is very much bound up with the pleasure of language.

> I probably have as many poetry books on my shelves at the moment that didn't go into storage as I have fiction. I tend to prefer reading poetry which rhymes as opposed to modern poetry. But I think that's because I read poetry because I like the sound. A lot of poetry I read aloud. And however many times I read it, in the majority of poems I see something I've missed before. My interpretation keeps building up. I care about interpretation but it doesn't worry me if I don't get it. I'll re-read. But what I really like is the sound, I like the way it flows, I like rhythm and rhyme and colour. It may have something to do with the fact that my mother read aloud to us. We grew up with oral reading. And in school too, we did a lot of choral speaking. We did "The Pied Piper of Hamelin" as a class project. Some verses we learned separately and some we said together. From the earliest grades we read a lot of poems and looked at imagery. We acted from poems. We used poems as a jumping off point for writing, for acting, for talking, for drawing. Interpretation came much later.

No one would ever speak this way about discursive writing. The meaning is still important, but the meaning is involved in the sounds, the imagery and the rhythms that can give so much pleasure. Whereas discursive writing has its reason for existence in the conveying of information, ". . . poetry is not primarily propositional. That is, poetry means through imagery, through rhythm, through 'melody' and not through direct statement (no matter how true the statement may be). If one is mainly interested in conveying a message, he or she should write essays, not poetry or fiction. Poetry communicates at a deeper level than the abstract, rational statement" (Warren, 1980, p. 18). And it communicates in quite a different way. Exchange of ideas, exciting and stimulating as that can be, is not enough for poetry. With poetry there must also be delight in the sounds and images of the language, and beyond that, awareness of artistry and some sense of wonder. "In poetry, wonder is coupled with the joy of speech" (Bachelard, 1960, p. 3).

Yvonne discusses another difference between poetry and discursive writing.

> It weems to me that discursive writing is basically pooled. I mean linguists can write articles about linguistics and they become dated because somebody in the field has contributed something else, and it's a kind of shared process where a number of people are tuning in or contributing and influencing each other. Whereas poetry, it seems to me, is almost a solo flight, one person's vision. A poet is influenced by other poets but not in the same way as the researcher is.

Earlier Jeff described academic writing as contributing to a fund of knowledge. Yvonne's statement indicates the same view: that of a fund or pool to which many people contribute so that an accumulation of knowledge is built up. This suggests that such texts are in one way incomplete. Each is a piece of something much larger. A poem or story by contrast has a wholeness of its own. It does not necessarily build on previous texts, nor will others following necessarily develop it further. A solo flight. So on the one hand it can be said that discursive writing has a shared quality which narratives and poems do not. On the other hand, the opposite is true. The stories and poems reflect our experience with being human and living with others in a way that discursive writing can never do. They show us ourselves and our world. Doug noted that "Grapes of Wrath gives a profounder view of social injustice than a discussion of it in a journal article." The story does not talk about social injustice, it shows it. In the showing, connotations and feelings run high; in the discussion about, a more reflective assessment is possible. This is the difference between a passionate and dispassionate view of a person or issue. Of course, it is possible to rant and rave in discursive writing, but that is usually recognizable for the poor writing it is. And ". . . scientific work provides knowledge separate from the work itself, whereas the literary art work provides a basis for aesthetic experience" (Detweiler, 1978, p. 34). The scientific knowledge exists apart from the language in which it is couched, the literary work does not. To lift information out of a scientific report does not change the information, provided it is restated accurately. And the information is usually the meat of the report. But what can be taken out of a literary work? What is removed is decontextualized, therefore altered. To restate an idea in other terms is to change the sound, the rhythm, the metaphors and hence to change the whole effect and meaning. A literary work subjected to dissection or alteration is a work destroyed. That difference between the two is a basic distinguishing criterion. If the verbal structure is mainly for facts, it is discursive; if the verbal structure is mainly for its own sake, it is literary (Frye, 1969).

Jeff, using the selection of educational leaders as a sample topic compares the effect of the two types of texts.

> The picture of social organization can be profounder in novels than in academic writing. One reason is that academic writing is writing through a filter, in a kind of pre-digested, pre-interpreted way. Academic writing seems to be premised on a perceived necessity to analyse, categorize and winnow out abstractions and to create models and show how and why things happen. That's off-putting. By contrast, The Masters could be seen as data. One could write an article on "The Politics of Choosing Educational Leaders" with ways worked out of showing the alignments and coalitions and what causes votes to switch. But what's powerful about The Masters is that it deals with life as one experiences it. Snow may have fabricated the whole thing since it's fiction, but the test of validity is a different kind. It may never have happened, but that doesn't matter. It's true. We bring our knowledge of how human beings behave and even if we've never been part of a selection process, we can pick up some of the human dynamics. There was that old semi-senile expert on Icelandic sagas, great scholar, but he didn't know which way was up. He didn't live in the present. I don't know anybody like him, but if I did that person would behave like him. I know it. There was the bursar who was bitter because of his own lack of career success and his son's failure. That's so real. And the two main characters, Jago and Crawford, people like them I have met. All of us have met scientists, the purer the better, who put boundaries on their world so that they can see how the day can come when it can be understood perfectly. That was the Crawford character. And those people look on the rest of us as malingerers because we haven't done with our fields what they have with theirs. They wonder why politicians can't behave rationally. If the world were run by scientists it would be a much better world. That book contends with the arrogance, the confidence and the optimism that are part of that bounded and closed view of reality. But the Jago character saw life in all its complexities and was so much greater. But both visions are so even-handedly dealt with, treated so generously. Here's Snow, the scientist, transcending that closed view in which he must have been trained and treating both characters with sympathy. Well, these things aren't dealt with in academic literature.

> Yet they're the stuff that makes the world go round. The very notion of scholarship means that the only way you can talk about leadership is in the kind of world view that the Crawford position represents. The only way that you can talk about leadership in contemporary academic writing is in terms of those enclosed systems that squeeze out the complexity of life that is the essence of the Jago character.

The essence of story appears to be in exactly those features Jeff is discussing: its ability to present individuals with their views and attitudes, involved in the web of circumstances of their lives, and through the characters and events to display underlying truths. Patterns such as the contrasting views of academic fields can simply be allowed to emerge in the story for the reader to take or leave. Not all readers would be as interested as Jeff is in approaches to scholarship, so not all would see these patterns so clearly. But they are there for the reader who is interested. Paradoxically, the strength of discursive writing may be that it does just what stories do not do: it makes explicit what stories leave implicit, it analyses, builds models, lists factors and theorizes. The reader is not left, as in stories, to ferret out principles; they are stated. And there are times when that is useful.

It is not surprising that the contrast between the methodologies and attitudes of artists and scientists should emerge so strongly in a C. P. Snow novel. Snow himself was interested enough in exactly that issue to have written a book—in discursive form—about it (The Two Cultures: And a Second Look. London: Cambridge University Press, 1964). Since he was employed as a scientist and also wrote novels, he had friends in both spheres and had more access than is usual to the thought and talk of both groups. The Masters and The Two Cultures allow an interesting comparison of how the same concept treated by the same skilled writer appears in story and in discursive writing, in other words, of the difference made by the structure of the text. It turns out to be considerable, including the stronger influence of scientism in the discursive text. The corporeality of the text is a significant part of the reality it evokes for the reader. And the contrasting ways the scientists and the artists view the world show the measure to which reality is influenced by our perceptions.

A Story, Sort of

My friend and I, we've spent our lives behind a desk
Country kids in academia
Reading, writing, teaching
Words, words in endless procession—then
For relaxation, we go for coffee and talk

Reading: by now I must know all about it
I've done it since my mother's lap
I've studied it, examined it
Analysed clinical protocols of readers
Endured weak jokes from colleagues
"Don't you ever get tired of reading about reading?"
Taught others how to teach it
Would dread having to live without it

But what on earth is the heart of it?
How describe it? Uncover it?
The greatest story ever told lives forever

In the shining eyes of eager learners,
And the generation and exchange, heated or cool,
Of ideas goes on in whatever form,
A story is not an essay is not a poem.
Keep chasing this bright, elusive butterfly

Chapter VII

REALITY

"I identify with . . ."

No Romance sold unto
Could so enthrall a Man
As the perusal of
His Individual One—
'Tis Fiction's—to dilute to Plausibility
Our Novel—When 'tis small enough
To Credit—'Tisn't true!
(Dickinson, 1960, p. 332)

We really don't want stories cut down to our size. Part of their appeal is in the sweep and grandeur, the larger than life dimension. But in another sense it is ourselves and our world we wish to see. And there is in the human situation something of the paradox Dickinson sets out: when our story is small enough to be completely plausible, something is missing. Experience is not necessarily credible. At one and the same time we want the text to show us ourselves and to carry us well beyond ourselves into new ways of life that we do not meet in the daily round.

> Jeff: Literature is a way of understanding aspects of life that I'm not living. Steinbeck's The Winter of Our Discontent deals with the disillusionment and discouragement of an older man whose life has not achieved the promises that had seemed realizable, and the courageous way he faces the disillusionment. He is ennobled by his courage. At the time I read it I had no personal sense of that stage of life. I was in my twenties and optimistic that everything is accomplishable—typical of that age. In addition to illuminating my contemporary experience, I find reading aids understanding of circumstances I haven't met yet. What the text opens up is not alienation from one's own experience. The theme of failure can speak to anybody. There's a Peanuts cartoon in which Lucy is wailing that life has no meaning: 'When you've failed your spelling text and can't do arithmetic, life has no

> meaning.' At every stage in life we have to come to grips with disillusionment. But once we've read about an experience, it's as much a part of us as being familiar with the route home from work.

In the example Jeff cites, the theme explored, failure, is one that can be experienced at any age and one that each of us has some experience with. Usually children have the first struggle with it at a very young age. Even if the incident is minor, it's the beginning of knowing what it feels like to fail. So most everyone shares the experience of feeling a failure at something, although exactly what we fail at varies greatly from person to person. Jeff, then, in reading The Winter of Our Discontent had no personal awareness of the particular type of failure and disillusionment facing the character of the story, but as he says, "The theme of failure can speak to anybody." Literature frequently builds upon a familiar theme but gives us particular instances that we, because of age, personality, or fortuity, have not met. One aspect to the so-called "universal themes" of literature is that most everyone has personally encountered them in one form and recognizes them when literature adds another. And so a story simultaneously gives us another example, extends our experience, reveals the reality that others live through and lets us see how someone else deals with these events. Stories and other literature, of course, are not mere explications of themes. They show people busy at life, acting and reacting in a host of ways.

And often there is one character for whom we have particular empathy or admiration. Jeff, in his example, speaks of the courage shown by the character facing discouragement. Sometimes what appeals is an image or a phrase that is so exactly right, so descriptive of our experience, that we take it as our own. The particular appeal of a character, image, or other aspect of the text is a frequently felt pleasure in reading and can be so strong that readers actually speak of identifying themselves with what appeals. "Identifying with" is an experience that takes different forms depending upon the reader and the text.

Sometimes the reader is a spectator. I feel myself present, I'm there, but watching the events unfold with no need to participate in them or influence them. Stories are sometimes written from this stance with the narrator as interested by-stander, as for example, Lewis Eliot in the Strangers and Brothers series. But the implied detachment of the reader is more apparent than real. The spectator usually takes sides, picks a character in the story and hopes and cheers for that person. The identification in this case involves wanting the best for an individual or group, hoping for a desirable outcome, cheering on a certain cause. The reader is drawn in, not quite to participating, but to feeling present and involved and into caring what happens. (If we do not care at all, we usually do not continue reading.) And narrators often become participants. Even that ultimate observer, Lewis Eliot, tries to influence the election of a new master for his college—and the reader becomes concerned about Eliot himself.

To some extent the text influences which character catches the reader's interest and attention. A main character gets more words and fuller development than a minor one, and hence is more noticeable. Also a character may be sympathetically or unsympathetically presented in such a way as to influence the reader's attitude. But readers still use the space in the story and their own inclinations to move toward different characters and views. Pat speaks of being fascinated by Rhett Butler. "Scarlett O'Hara was such an obvious and superficial character that I didn't care about her, but Rhett Butler was complex, seeming one way in public, but privately contradicting that public image. He's almost a character in layers. I was really intrigued by trying to understand how the layers fit together." Yvonne speaks very much in contrast to that view:

> When I was young I carried book characters around in my head. Not only the characters but the whole style and way of looking at life. I'm sure that I unconsciously, or at least not too overtly, imitated the style of books. I remember being tremendously impressed with Gone With the Wind. I wasn't the least interested in Rhett Butler, but I thought Scarlett O'Hara was the neatest person on the face of the earth. I wanted to be like her.

The point here is not the validity of either Pat's or Yvonne's view, but rather that even a popular romance fosters such differing identification.

And with maturity and experience a reader's views may change. Martin describes his response to the characters in Julius Caesar.

> I first read the play in a high school literature class, and I identified with Cassius. I liked his vivid descriptions of people and politics—actually, I really like his cynicism. Brutus seemed very dull and wishy-washy, always mumbling around in his garden about what he ought to do. Several years later when I taught the play myself, I discovered that my reaction had really changed. Cassius then seemed manipulative and vengeful, whereas Brutus had become for me an honest picture of a man striving to do right and caught between two undesirable alternatives. Maybe I was then more aware of how real ethical dilemmas are in this life and I was very sympathetic to Brutus in his struggle with it. But I noticed that some of my students really leaned toward Cassius.

Martin's understanding of human nature and the issues that are of concern have changed in the interim. Perhaps so have the characteristics that appeal to him and the people he would choose as friends. There seems to be some similarity between the characters who appeal to us in story and the personalities we like in actual life. But only some similarity. In stories the scope is much wider. We meet all sorts of characters we would just not encounter in the limited contacts of the daily routine. And in stories we not only meet them, we get to know them and to see past the clothing, mannerisms, or speech styles that can raise barriers ordinarily. And our attitude toward story characters can change more readily.

In Yvonne's expression of admiration for Scarlett O'Hara there is a hint of a move toward becoming a participant. Entering the story as participant is another form of identification. The reader can become a character in the story, either as an additional character or an altered form of an existing character. Cathy recalls reading a novel set during the American War of Independence, in which the young seamstress who is the heroine fell in love with a man named Luke.

> I've forgotten her name, but I remember his. I had such a good time with him. I didn't become her. She was beautiful and had all those heroine characteristics which I sadly lack. But I took her place and fell in love with him too. How could you help it? But that was a popular romantic tale. Great literature I think causes a different reaction. When I read Dr. Zhivago, for example I sympathized with Lara, but I never became her. When I read a novel now, a good novel that's telling something about life, it's almost like watching a bird in a cage. I see people trapped by human failings, jealousy, hate. And I'd almost like to give them some of my insight: 'Here, try this,' almost as if I have more imagination to see outcomes than the characters have. I think that reflects on us, too; there are so many things that keep us from seeing. Occasionally when a particular character is clever or perceptive I admire the insight with which a situation was handled. But, maybe because of what I choose to read, it usually seems more tragic with the characters trapped in some way. I don't become the character, but emotionally I'm right there.

Cathy has here described two ways of participating in the story: shoving a character aside and taking over oneself, or being a sympathetic but more global observer who sees the whole scene and wants to give advice. The second is both participant and spectator. It is a rather god-like stance of looking down on the scene spread out below, seeing the traps and the opportunities which are not nearly so apparent from ground-level and urging the characters toward fullness of being, if only they could hear and would listen.

Nancy practices a third way of participating, not playing god, but playing author. "I sometimes rewrite in my mind the endings to stories, or I continue the story. Or I put myself in situations which are not identical to those in the text, but have certain similarities and from that I create my story which I control." Cathy's view of wanting to help the characters involves a stance of staying within the story, of admitting the reality and vitality of the characters. Nancy's is somewhat more pragmatic, a stance in which she is conscious of herself as reader and co-creator of text and can, when she likes, assume full control, at least temporarily.

Doug also plays author.

> If the story doesn't satisfy me in some way, I'll rewrite it. The closer it comes to my notion of nicely done, the more I leave it alone. But if it seems to miss, I'll reconstruct. That reaches it's peak when I read students' papers! But that's an instructional view, since suggestions for improvements are part of a teacher's task. With published text, that's less likely. One thing that happens all the time, though, is that I'll flesh out a character, add details to a scene. If a prairie ranch-house is pictured, I'll see the sky behind it. That happens most with better writing. The poorer the writing, the less you can do that.

This is almost a matter of: if the text is poor it needs rewriting, if it's good the rewriting happens more automatically. But that is a misrepresentation. There is an important difference between taking the text apart in order to reconstruct it and filling in the space which the text invitingly contains. The first has an analytic and judgmental necessity about it, while the second frees the imagination for enjoyment. But both involve clear reader participation with the text. And reader creativity. "Art begins as soon as 'I don't like this' turns into 'this is not the way I could imagine it'" (Frye, 1963, p. 9).

In many participant involvements there is a strong element of day-dreaming. The day-dreaming can be quite active as in Cathy's or Nancy's rewriting of the story. Or it can be more tranquil. Jeff speaks of "letting some episode or passage rest in my mind and enjoying it, with no real intellectual activity, sort of like going for a walk in a meadow, no analysis, just being there. This is often stimulated by the beauty of the language and what it suggests." Whatever form the day-dreaming may take, it's pure pleasure. That is its raison d'être and that is what it gives the reader. Pragmatism has nothing to do with it. The pleasure of day-dreaming is "not very closely related to the probability of realization" (Britton, 1969, p. 103). Improbability of realization takes nothing away from the pleasure and perhaps adds to it, since there are no consequences to face.

Readers recognize the day-dreaming, whether during the reading or afterwards, as something arising from the reading and closely related to it, but also somehow different. The balance in the dialogue with the text has shifted somewhat, so that the reader exercises more control. Since readers know what they are doing and enjoy it, it is simply one of the "side-effect" pleasures of reading. A problem sometimes arises for children or others who are having reading difficulty and who fail to distinguish between interpreting the text and day-dreaming beyond it. The day-dreams may be interpreted as though included in the text. Readers are not free to extrapolate ad infinitum unless they can separate the additions from the original. A break-down of "loyalty to the print" must be a matter for concern and discussion to teachers of reading—or teachers of any other act of interpretation. The distinction between necessary interpretation and unwarranted extrapolation is not particularly apparent. This is especially so when the day-dreaming incorporates, as it usually does, "real" text and "real" reader.

> We had an interesting discussion the other day about the linking of reality and fantasy. You see I think that's what happens in day-dreaming. You're the real you, but you fantasize in certain ways. And the real person impinges on the fantasy in certain ways, but when you don't want to fantasize or something goes wrong then you shut it off because you're in control. I think that's very fundamental to the reading process and that's why it bothers me that people don't talk about it. People talk about cognition and leave out imagination almost completely.

Nancy is making an interesting point. When I day-dream about what I might be or do, I am still me in a very fundamental way. I may make myself more attractive or add talents I don't have, but this more glamorous person who emerges is still recognizably me. And the story is recognizable, although the day-dream may have made structural alterations to it. These changes are not necessarily an aspect of the day-dream but they can be.

In another sense the identification with the text can be a return to ourselves and our experience. And the life about which we daydream may be our own.

> Cathy: When I read a story which is close to my own experience then I want to tell my own story, because of the similarity. One person that can really touch that off is W. O. Mitchell. The reason is, I suppose, that he talks about the prairie and I was brought up on the prairie. A lot of the experiences of that kid, Brian, are different in details from the experiences I had, but the questions I had arising from the environment in which I lived were very similar. And so he helps me remember my whole childhood and to articulate what it is I experienced. I identify with the child too, because we lived just two houses from the edge of town, and there was the prairie. I can remember standing at the edge of it and looking out over it and wondering what's out there. But I always went back to the house and never mentioned that I'd been to look. What he's doing is helping me see who I was at that time. And I think there are certain qualities that are always there no matter what the circumstances, qualities that experience doesn't change. Those are brought into focus as well.

Cathy shows clearly the importance of the imagination, not only in looking forward, but in looking back at who I have been. This is much more than mere nostalgia about childhood. It involves making my life whole and complete by merging the past and the present. The me who was, still is. "The child is father of the man." And I cannot understand myself and my life by taking only a slice of time, but must bring together all the time that I have had. Cathy wonders also about the extent to which experience shapes a person compared with the influence of inner qualities that have always been part of her and that experience does not change. To consider these she must go back to the child who was and become aware again of how that child felt and thought. This use of the imagination to look backward insightfully is also a way of looking forward. By seeing who and where I was and who and where I am, I can draw a line between the two; then by sighting along that line

I can extend it into the future and see where I appear to be headed. Looking backward may in the end be the only way we have of looking forward. History, personal or public, is not so much a record of the past as an indicator of the future.

Cathy's standing at the edge of the prairie is not a naive childhood incident but a life analogy. The prairie is big and unknown and it offers no promises of security. Yet it continually fascinates, and it always invites the child to step out. And what else can we do with life but step out in anticipation into the unknown?

Another form of identification, that is both imaginative and practical and is also a common experience of readers is to consider the characters in the text as an example of what I might be. At times this is a comparison and a standard against which to measure myself. In similar circumstances would I be that noble or that despicable?

> Betty: While I'm reading the novels, the people become real. I guess I look at them as would I like to be like that person, would I like to have that kind of strength of character. Or would I react the same way in that situation. I guess when I live with them I try to become that person. I try to imagine whether I would have the strength of character, or would I have the guts to do what Conor did in Trinity. Would I ever have that intense belief in something to be able to know that I would give my life for it? I put myself in those shoes to make judgments about myself.

This is a further probing away at the fundamental question of who am I. But it is also an attempt to assess my own character, values, and beliefs and see how I fit in and contribute to society.

Doug describes how this sometimes happens to him during the actual reading.

> I know I've had times when I'll keep reading but all of a sudden it's as if my thinking powers have become heightened, so I can still go ahead and keep track of the story, but there's another

> level. It's two levels simultaneously. I'm also thinking about my life, reviewing experiences I've had or trying to gain some insight into who I am right now, or I'm predicting the future in some way. It's a form of evaluation in both directions. I may reject something in the story if it doesn't ring true, or assess myself when it does ring true. I see things in myself that I don't like, and I see alternatives that I think I'd like to be more like that.

This is part of the vision given by reading: an example or a model of what I'd like to become. It's nothing so simple as setting myself a goal or so naive as teenage hero worship, but rather a building up of my vision of desirable human traits and a renewed awareness that these characteristics may be within reach. If we really want to think carefully about a character or an event, we may pause in the reading or ruminate afterwards; but in a more intuitive less analytical way, the admiration and self-awareness does go on while reading, as Doug indicates. This may not always be a matter of two simultaneous tracks in the mind, but sometimes while reading on a jab of self-awareness: "I couldn't do that," "I wouldn't be like that," "I wonder if I would . . ." A vision extending and clarifying.

A variation of this self-awareness is to think about both which character I am like and which social role I would most naturally fit into. Jeff frequently thinks this way:

> I say to myself, now which of these people would I be most like? In which capacity would I likely find myself? Sometimes I ask my students to do this too, because it helps in understanding social structures. Take Lord of the Flies as an example. It's almost fantasy literature. It's not a believable real situation, but as a parable it's profound, plus an interesting study of leadership. I couldn't identify with either Jack or Ralph, but I would want to be close to leadership, like Piggy or Simon. I see myself as having the intellectual inclinations of Piggy and perhaps the intuitive and semi-articulate capacities of Simon, who can see but can never articulate his vision.

To see is the first gift; the second is to be able to communicate the insight. Perhaps only great poets do both particularly well; but since the seeing and the sharing are a large part of what gives life its meaning, the rest of us willingly strive for insight. One of the real gifts of reading is that we are allowed to share the insights of those with clearer vision.

Cathy, when asked what the experience of identifying with text is like, responded:

> For one thing, the poem becomes a part of me and of my experiences. It helps me to put a label on the way I see my experiences. I tend, after having read a poem to express my experiences, at least to myself, in the poet's terms and expressions. Poetry is something I carry within myself, and it helps me deal with situations when I come across them. A poem, even if it describes a particular experience, tends to be universal.

How often an experience calls to mind a poet's phrase, a phrase that is apt, and with terseness and beauty puts the experience into language. With the apt languages comes a cooler clearer response to the experience. Whether the mood be joyful, ironic, rueful, painful . . . have we not experienced the truths that:

> "No man is an island, entire of itself alone;
> every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main."
>
> "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways."
>
> "She walks in beauty like the night
> of cloudless climes and starry skies."
>
> "Time and the hour runs through the roughest day."
>
> "Much madness is divinest sense
> To a discerning Eye
> Much sense—the starkest Madness"

The experience calls the language to mind and the language clarifies what has happened in the experience. Another circle of understanding. And an influential form of identifying with the text.

Dialogue with Fictional Characters

Closely related to identifying with characters is dialoguing with them. In narratives the sharing that occurs may sometimes be between the reader and the fictional characters. "After all, the magic of art is in making it possible for real and fictional people to exchange thoughts and feelings and, eventually love" (Lionni, 1976, p. 85).

Exchange thoughts with a fictional person who be definition does not exist? How is that possible? But readers commonly talk as if they know these fictional characters. For Yvonne: "Fictional characters are real in that they do in a sense live. They have integrity. And I suppose the great ones I can imagine living elsewhere. It's not too difficult to put them in a different context. It's not difficult to imagine having a cup of tea with them. You have that illusion that you know everything about them. It seems incredible when you think of it."

Yvonne is suggesting not only that it is possible to see the characters functioning in the presented situation, but also that we can know them so well that we can anticipate their actions and responses in very different contexts. And why not? That is exactly how we think of real people. We meet them in one situation and can then, if we choose, anticipate probable encounters elsewhere. But this can only happen if the characters "have integrity" in the sense that they are like real people, realistic, and we can put to use our usual understandings of what people are like and how they think, feel and behave.

The possibility of this knowledge is supported graphically by Jeff.

> I really got interested a few years ago in Anthony Trollope and I read the Palliser series. I don't think Trollope is a great storyteller, that is his plots aren't really wonderful, but his characters are absolutely marvellous; and I found more with Trollope than with any other writer, that the voices of the characters became real. I don't know anything about English accents, but I could pick up their accents and when I read them I heard them. I could picture the people, and in some ways those people became real to me as I read. It was as if those people were speaking in my presence and I was there. One or two characters I really felt would have been my friends because I liked them so much. So much so that when I saw the characters on television, I'd say, 'No! that's not the way he spoke. That's not the way she was. I know it.' I guess that's something that everybody does when you've read a book and you see it presented on the screen. The characters and voices aren't quite the way you've pictured them. But I had very definite opinions. I actually knew those people, so I knew that the person that produced "The Pallisers" for television missed the boat in certain cases.

Jeff's sense of hearing just how the characters spoke does not particularly occur with any story (in fact, he cites it as something of an exception), but it is one facet of experiencing the characters as real and knowable people with whom we converse. And in order to be involved in a conversation or an action we must be present as it occurs. So the experience of reading an intriguing story involves the sense of being there, of having events happen "in my presence." And the reader changes worlds, so that for the time of reading, the world of the text becomes more real than the physical situation of the reader, and we truly "are there."

Another evidence of the reality of the fictional people is that real people seem to belong in the fiction. Yvonne reports that, "The other day I said of someone that he was a real character out of Graham Greene. I didn't mean any particular character, but just that this man belongs in a Graham Greene novel. He has the essence of a Greene character." This interchangeability shows the reality of the Greene characters. The dichotomy between fiction and reality disappears and characters move freely between them, just as real people move in and out of our presence but live on in our minds whether or not physically there.

This interchange can happen only with stories that are well enough written to reflect actual experience. If the characters exceed the normal bounds and are too heroic, too perfect, too one-sided, or too extreme in any direction to be human, the stories are justly regarded as second-rate literature. We cannot understand the characters in usual human terms, and therefore we cannot really care what happens to them.

For we do care about the fictional-real people. Jeff speaks of reading Quiet Flows the Don:

> It deals with events in the southern Ukraine in the area where the Don Cossacks lived. That story deals with what happens to pretty ordinary people when a revolution takes place. It's a wonderful story. As an epic novel, I'd compare it to Tolstoy, except Sholoknov is so unrelievedly honest that you just can't take it anymore, at least I couldn't. Every person that you begin to develop an attachment to dies. And doesn't die in bed, but dies violently. He's telling us what a revolution is like. Revolution tears apart a social system, and tears apart all the people that you've come to know and trust.

"Every person you begin to develop an attachment to . . ." Jeff takes it for granted that the attachment will be there and goes on to focus on the description of revolutions and the painful wrench experienced when the attachment is disrupted. But the sadness is evidence that the bond had been there.

Jeff describes himself as an observer of stories and claims that in both life and literature, he is content to be an observer and feels no need to jump in and influence the action. Nevertheless, his words show his involvement.

> I wasn't particularly interested in finishing Lord of the Rings because I knew how it was going to end. I loved the book so much, and I'd come to love the people in it so much that I didn't want to participate in the dissolution of the fellowship. Do you know what I mean when I talk about the fellowship? It was really something, a rare kind of thing. And I think maybe the reader becomes part of the fellowship. I mean, you become part of that group of people, if you can call them all people. So I looked ahead and saw that the next theme heading was 'The Fellowship Dissolved' and I thought I'd save that.

In a fellowship, the talk goes well beyond superficiality and trivia to a sharing of concerns that are important in the lives of the members; it involves an honest humility and caring response toward each other; loneliness is alleviated. The idea of being part of a genuine fellowship is infinitely attractive, an experience to be sought and cherished. Even the fictional fellowship can generate the spirit and show what it is like to be part of such a group. This happens to the extent that Jeff suggests that the reader can participate in the fellowship, can understand how warm and welcoming an experience it is. Jeff does not object to the ending. He is clear about the fact that the story ends as it must; a "happy ever after" ending would be manipulated and artifical and therefore very unsatisfactory. But his acceptance of the appropriateness does not mean he has to like it. And he is so appreciative of the fictional fellowship that he is unwilling to let it go. Although he knows generally, at least, what happens, his refusal to read of the dispersal gives the fellowship another breath of life.

Martin's comment on fictional characters seems at first glance to have a very different focus.

> It often seems to me that in getting to know people we get to know a dimension of them in a book that you often don't in real life. With fictional characters, you often sort of get inside their skins, and get their thoughts in a way you never do with real people. Maybe part of it is that with a fictional character you are seeing all there is to that person, whereas with real people you can never be sure you know them completely.

Betty comments in a similar vein:

> I suppose in a sense they seem more real because they convey the emotions or problems that in real life we try to hide or suppress. The author has to describe the emotions or feelings of the characters so that you can understand how that character is feeling and why they would do this. Maybe it's more real because it's all there, whereas in real life if we're upset or something we try to conceal it so that others don't see our reactions. So maybe when we read about these characters we can see them as real because it's all there, whereas real people are hiding or covering their innermost selves.

So we can know fictional characters more intimately and more fully than we usually know real people. Surely that is unrealistic? Perhaps it is surreal; it brings clarity to understandings which in daily life have a certain haziness. A form of tacit knowledge is made a little more explicit. And it permits the forming of mini-fellowships. We can know the characters well enough to know who we are in harmony with, who are admirable figures, who can become friends, and who are none of these. It may be that this chance to participate in the lives of others and become friends is part of what the love of stories is all about.

Betty continues:

> Some characters are so very real. The characters in Thornbirds touched me quite a lot. Maybe the weakness of that priest—in real life I wouldn't think of associating those human traits with a priest. I would think of him as more rigid and rather unreal, whereas I could understand that person in Thornbirds and feel what his feelings must be. So in that sense characters do become more real to me, maybe just because they're exposed more than in real life.

The greater completeness with which Betty sees this character makes her more aware of his situation and why he thinks and acts as he does, and this greater understanding makes her more tolerant than she would be in real life where she would know less about the person. In this instance, her expectations and pre-judgments of what priests are like are penetrated by the revealing of this character, and what she sees is his humanness, a reflection of her own humanness. He is not some strange species different from her, a priest; he is like a human being with shared humanness, and thus very understandable.

But maybe with fictional characters, as with actual people, we do not always know them as fully as we think we do. They may still have the capacity to surprise us or to develop more fully. Fictional characters are not automatically open and known, not even to their author, as Margaret Laurence shows.

> For a writer of fiction, part of the heart remains that of a stranger, for what we are trying to do is to understand those others who are our fictional characters, somehow to gain entrance to their minds and feelings, to respect them for themselves as human individuals, and to portray them as truly as we can. The whole process of fiction is a mysterious one, and a writer, however experienced, remains in some ways a perpetual amateur, or perhaps a perpetual traveller, an explorer of those inner territories, those strange lands of the heart and spirit. (1976, p. vii)

It is striking how Laurence speaks of the characters as very real and of the writer as coming to know them just as people do naturally get to know each other. She also makes clear that the inner recesses of the human heart are not fully explored and mapped. Perhaps that is why we can never be quite certain just what we will meet, in ourselves or others, when we journey there. Where we are most at home is also where we are not totally familiar. That paradox is part of the mystery and the appeal and of the reason we willingly return.

Yvonne mentions another attractive aspect: "The older I get, the more reading becomes not just reading a single book, but it's as if you live in a kind of eternal library. The books you've read are there, you always know they're there somewhere and you can go and get them. You know, at night the characters come out!" For anyone who likes to read, the idea of being able to go about the usual daily tasks while "living in an eternal library" has great appeal. There is an enduring quality about these experiences and relationships. Because they are part of us, we carry them about with us and can call them up at will. And the characters do indeed "come out at night." Sometimes they come because a real person is so much like them ("a real character out of Graham Greene"); sometimes they come at the call of an event or a remark that "reminds" us, that puts them in our minds and attention again; sometimes they come to start a daydream and play out their roles on the inner stage of the mind at rest; and sometimes they come to be examined thoughtfully for their suggestions on how to deal with real life situations facing us. But they do not abandon us, the library remains in and around us as we go.

And since the story, the characters and their experiences are part of us, they seem real. To deny them we would have to deny, eliminate, part of ourselves. And how could we separate that part from the rest of us, even if we wanted to? In addition, "an author can create a fictional situation which is more real than life. He puts into that situation characters and details that you may experience throughout a whole life, but here it's compacted into one book. In that sense it's a very dramatic immersion in a real world but one that maybe you have to have experienced part of before." Cathy suggests that what we experience and understand in the fiction is our previous lived experience. The fictional characters have such reality because they are another presentation of previous experience with people. Fiction and reality merge into lived experience.

Richard Adams begins the preface to A Girl in a Swing with the statement, "This story is such a mixture that even upon reflection I cannot be sure of unravelling the experienced from the imagined." Exactly. Although Adams is speaking from the writer's point of view of sorting out real and fictional people in the novel, that reality, or "compacted experience" as Cathy calls it, is part of the reader's experience. While Adams may need to identify the real people in order to be ethically responsible in publishing, there is little reason for the reader to do so. The characters are experienced as they are, as known people, whether or not they own birth certificates.

"The concept of the life-world is especially important for phenomenological literary criticism, for it suggests the possibility of discovering or recovering the authentic personality of a character in fiction or of the author implied in the fiction which cannot be encountered historically or psychologically" (Detweiler, 1978, p. 13).

And so we return to the question with which we began this discussion: How is it possible to dialogue with fictional people? What is really not possible is the question. The characters are experienced as real. We watch them, listen to them, respond to them and make judgments about them as we do with those we meet in daily living. The dialogue goes on, and they join the internal, eternal library.

"As if there were no book"

Saul Bellow in his Nobel prize acceptance speech said, "Perhaps mankind cannot bear too much reality. But neither can it bear too much unreality, too much abuse of truth" (cited by Hess, 1978, p. 145). From childhood on, we seek to determine what is real, what "counts." Childhood is filled with the question, "Is that true?" Children, with their limited experience, often cannot tell immediately what is true, but the question shows clearly that they have already learned the importance of truth value. Only what is true can be trusted, and children are particularly dependent on trust. So we develop a life-long pattern of looking for what is real and true. The first part of Bellow's statement has often been noted. Reality can at times be harsh and relentless. And then we do cry out for relief and perhaps escape to our stories, our dreams, whatever pleasures are available. But the reverse is equally important. We cannot be nourished only on the gooey dessert of fairy tales. It is important to see how life really is and know what is stable and dependable. In fact, we sometimes describe a disturbed state of mind with the phrase, "out of touch with reality."

So ability to discern reality ~~is~~ important in our experience, so much so that we use it as a touchstone of sanity. But what is real, what counts as reality? Here the water becomes very muddy. Philosophers have argued this question for centuries, at least since Plato and his cave and reflections. But whatever philosophers may say about the ideal and the real, we know that in our daily lives we experience objects and certain physical principles such as gravity as real and reliable.

When it comes to texts, however, the question gets complicated. Is fiction real? Does it have truth value? Can it be true and at the same time unreal? Are discursive texts true if they give accurate information and false if they do not? Are stories experienced as real or as purely imaginative? Or both? Does it vary with the story? Is any text, since it deals with language and not objects, one step removed from reality? The question is about the representation of life. Frye states, "The world of literature is a world where there is no reality except that of the human imagination" (1963, p. 40). Granted that imagination is vital, the statement almost seems to beg the question. "No reality except"—does the word "except" mean that imagination is a form of reality? Frye responds that ". . . what we read in literature is neither real nor unreal. We have two words, imaginary, meaning unreal, and imaginative, meaning what the writer produces, and they mean entirely different things" (1963, p. 24). So for Frye, literature is cast on a new and different plain. But lack of reality is denied; the imaginative is not unreal, a point worthy of note by parents and teachers who may be concerned about the imaginative powers of young children and the effect of fairy tales, for instance, upon children.

Ricoeur at one point spoke of "the revelation of a real more real than ordinary reality" (1976, p. 42). Perhaps texts, as well as paintings, can have a surreal quality. Alice points toward this more real, more revealed, quality in text.

> I think the reality of the emotional experience in reading is sometimes far more vivid than what we can observe in reality, because the author is able to give us clues and insights that are there and yet in modern life we can be looking at the same situation and miss all the clues. The author discloses things for us. A whole interaction is made observable, whereas if you were sitting in the same room with that same conversation you might not see it because you'd be concerned with "real" things like teacups and taking people's coats off. When an ordinary life situation is described in a book you might know more about those people than if you were participating in the situation yourself, because we get hung up on the physical things happening around us.

In daily living we miss details and pieces, "miss all the clues," sometimes because our attention is distracted as Alice says by teacups and coats, and sometimes because parts of the story were not disclosed. People, either deliberately or incidentally, did not reveal a certain characteristic or explain a happening. In text, the author can flesh the story out as fully as necessary. If the story is well-written what we need will be revealed. There is no such assurance in daily life. That is one "realer than life" quality. Conversely, in a well-written story everything that is included has a reason for being there and makes a contribution to the story. In daily life, much happens that is insignificant or inconsequential and the first task is to sort out what to attend to.

Also, in stories we may be permitted to get inside the characters' heads and know them from the inside out, instead of the usual outside in experience of becoming acquainted with people. Betty shows the difference made in her impression of a character by having this inside understanding available.

> People in novels sometimes seem more real than real people because of the way you can look into a character and see the whole character. I was thinking of a book I really enjoyed, Jane Eyre. I really admired her strength of character in doing

> what she thought was right. Some of her decisions were based so much on rationality, that if I met a person like that in real life I'd think this is a really thick-headed person who insists on making these decisions because of being too rigid. But when the author conveys her whole character to you, you can understand why she took the stance that she did and was so adamant about it. To me she was a very real alive character, and I could admire her strength of character for standing up to what was right for her, even though it may not have been right for someone else. But she had to live with herself. I think if I met someone like her now in real life I'd think that the person was going overboard or being a bit dogmatic.

Betty's statement suggests that if she actually met Jane Eyre she would partially misunderstand her because she would have less insight. In either case, Betty views Jane as dogmatic. That assessment of character stays the same. What changes is Betty's understanding of the reason and purpose for Jane's behaviour, and hence in reading she is more sympathetic and admiring than she would be if she met the actual Jane. The greater insight that might not be possible outside the text makes the character seem a little more rational and human, and in that sense more real.

Jeff indirectly raises another aspect of reality in fiction in commenting on John Fowles' novel, The Magus.

> It's the most skilled of books in the sense that Fowles plays with the notion of what's real and what's illusion. Throughout the book he plays with the reader. He shows you something and lets you think it's real and then he takes it back and shows that it was really phony. So at some point in the book you as a reader become completely at Fowles' mercy. He plays with you. You don't know whether what he's telling you is real or illusion and the book ends with you still being unsure. With the final event in the story, you are still puzzled as to whether this event in these people's lives is real or illusion, or even more is Fowles just doing a sleight of hand trick with us.

The only way that this view of The Magus is possible for Jeff is if he is taking from his actual experience a clear concept of what constitutes reality and applying it to the novel. Without that, he would have no basis for questioning reality and illusion. The underlying assumption appears to be that the standards and views of ordinary life and its expectations of reality are applied by both writer and reader. That is, what is real remains the same. When the idea is tampered with by the novelist, uncertainties arise for the reader. We realize most fully what our expectations of reality are when they are not quite met. That is how we recognize illusion and fantasy in stories, and how we realize that unless otherwise warned we expect literature to be real. That is also why truth is stranger than fiction. In actual experience the bizarre occasionally happens; in serious fiction it is not allowed to.

Fiction that is either fantastic or stereotyped is regarded as of poor quality. Why so? Is not the usual reason given that "life isn't like that"? Actual people are much more complex than stereotypes and life is not, like a Harlequin Romance, completely predictable. So a text has little credibility if it does not show "real life"—another indication of our expectations of reality in literature.

A sense of reality is conveyed not merely in life-like characters with whom we could have a cup of tea, but in a certain authenticity of detail, description that rings true. Nancy, in discussing two accounts of an event in which she had been involved, said that the autobiographical account by an insider was both more slanted and more powerful than the report written later by someone not present at the time. The insider conveyed a sense of how life was, what people did and what it was like. The outsider's record of the facts lacked that immediacy and therefore seemed less real. Alice also finds authenticity in settings and details which reflect her actual experience:

> It's not just the characters; it's also the description of the setting that will make me say, 'Oh yes, I've been in that kind of situation.' It's the quality of the description as the time and place the characters are in that sparks something for me. Artists have an eye for detail that the rest of us are apt to miss.

The reality is in the reflection of the reader's personal experience. What constitutes authenticity in this case is that the text is portraying what I have personally found to be so. The more it reflects my understanding of what life is like, the more authentic and trust-worthy it is. And the more realistic it seems.

"The test for what an author is committed to is what counts as a mistake" (Searle, 1975, p. 330). And in fiction, that has much to do with truth, but little to do with facts. When Mrs. Malaprop says that she wants her daughter to learn just enough geography to know the countries contagious to her own, the statement contains an error but is not a mistake on Sheridan's part. Since Mrs. Malaprop is continually trying to lay claim to erudition not possessed, the statement is very much in order, and as an indicator of her character has a truth value. In discursive writing, by contrast, a factual inaccuracy would almost always be synonymous with a mistake. Similarly, a fantasy, which may contain creatures that never existed and events which defy laws of physics, is not necessarily a mistake. Whether it is or not cannot be decided on such criteria, but rather on the extent to which it gives us a clearer view of our actions and our beings. In this case the test of reality is not in physics, but in the human domains of love and loneliness, alienation and anticipation, disappointment and delights. "I don't see the appeal so much in the fantasy world which is a strange world, as that it's about real life. It tells me about me and says that there's good and bad in the world and things may turn out all right. It helps develop a world view." So fiction, including fantasy, is expected to be about real life and illuminate real life.

And it seems real also because we accept it as such. We take it as real, for the time being at least. "Their (readers) usual awareness of a distinction between inner self and the outer world breaks down because, in aesthetic reading, by definition, readers simply do not pay attention to the difference" (Jacobsen, 1982, p. 24). Jacobsen refers to this combined world as "potential space" where text and reader are both active. And we do use the potential space. We create in it our own private worlds. Some individuals may fill more of the potential space, create a rich world. Perhaps as Doug suggested, artists have more sensitivity to detail and focus their worlds more sharply, and they may use their imaginations a little more fully, but each individual has a private world.

Are they all different? Or is there some overlap, some sharing? Yvonne suggests not only that shared reality is possible, but that it's crucial.

> I suppose what writing and reading must be about—we must view them as shared reality, otherwise we'd never engage. Each of us has a sort of inner sense that is ours alone and is very important; but equally important is the idea that you share the reality. You have an inner reality, but if you have only that inner reality, you're psychotic. So the inner reality must have a shared dimension. You can do that orally, people do all the time, but it's also possible to do it through books. It's a matter of really appreciating each other, acknowledging

> at least part of the other person's inner reality. Maybe it's that the two lives reflect each other.

Having an inner reality is vital to our being, to nourishment of the spirit. But at least a portion of it must be shared. And the dialogue of reading is one vital way that such sharing can occur. With text, there is no need to go looking for a friend and find out if the friend has a bit of free time; the text is to hand. And the text allows us to select those aspects that we find compelling and to pause and examine what is real and what matters to us.

The depth and value of the reading encounter are often not fully realized. We may not stop to think how significant an impact our reading can have on our way of looking at life—on what is real for us. How positive or negative that impact may be is another question to consider. Kwant's view is clear:

> There exists the danger that the duplication of the world on paper will be made a norm of the real world. Because this duplication has made it possible for man to obtain a comprehensive picture of reality, those who work in the world of paper will be inclined to look at the real world in the mirror of the paper world. As a result they may not have a sufficient feeling of reality itself. (1965, p. 244)

Perhaps this warning is well taken. An encounter with text is not a substitute for meeting people, but an additional rich facet of life available to us. But even while issuing the warning, Kwant describes the world of paper as making possible a "comprehensive picture of reality." And the distinction between the "world of paper" and the "real world" seems much less clear than Kwant suggests. Indeed it is not so much that they are dichotomous entities as that the reading world is one aspect of reality, and one that so pervades our thinking that it cannot be separated out but rather merges into our lives.

> The house was quiet and the world was calm.
> The reader became the book; and the summer night
>
> Was like the conscious being of the book
> The house was quiet and the world was calm.
>
> The words were spoken as if there were no book,
> Except that the reader leaned above the page.
> (Stevens, 1964)

When we become absorbed in the reading, then indeed it is as if there were no book and the words are spoken directly. The intermediary abstraction of print disappears, for a time at least, and the reader lives in the created world. The felt experience is not that of reading, but of participating in the text's world. So the text is part of the reader and seen through so fully that it is no longer experienced as there, "except that the reader leans above the page."

O World Invisible We View Thee

Mirage — seen but not there

Reflection — seen but only a trick of light

Illusion — perceived but intangible

Image — pictured but only in the mind

Memory — felt but no longer present

Dream — felt but never was

None of them real?

What of life without them?

Why so felt, known, and vivid?

And reading?

When the reader becomes the book

When the image is more vivid than the room

The memory influences words
And the paper people are alter ego

Chain of life, each link forged by dreams
Born of inner reality
Image of reflection
Upon the memory

Chapter VIII

IMAGINATION

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.
(Frost, 1972, p. 103)

It is mid-May and the escarpment behind the house is covered with trees which are indeed green-gold—for today. I know I'd better look now, but the looking and enjoyment raise questions: Why does beauty often seem so shimmering and so ephemeral? Why are mountain-top experiences so fleeting? Why is it that nothing gold can stay? And why does this little poem seem so right, call me back to itself, and emerge gently, but forcibly, unbidden in my mind when something gold slips away?

Is it that I have seen Eden sink to grief and the poem reconstructs my experience (déja vu), or is it that the poem vividly portrays an aspect of human experience and shows me, all unaware, what can happen? Both. Part of the appeal of the poem is that I have learned that beauty is fleeting, that mountain-top experiences do not last, that flashes of insight are usually flashes. But how very mundane that sentence is compared with the power of "Nothing gold can stay." The metaphor is a "structured indicator" that "guides the imagination" to create an image and extend and clarify my vision of life. And it is my vision of life that guides my actions and my views, that sustains or constrains me. Because my physical experience is of necessity limited, bound by my finiteness in time and place, I can vastly extend my vision and deepen my understanding through the experience of reading. Indeed this wish (need?) to see and grow beyond my self is a major motivator for reading.

What vision, then, is formed in reading? How am I lost in a book? And what is the quality of the inner life created through reading?

Vision

Girl reading
She overhears the sound of things in hiding.
She bites an apple and imagines orchard starlight.
Each time she licks her thumb, its tip,
she tastes the barely shaking branches,
she hears a sigh migrate from page to page.
(Bill Manhire, Times Literary
Supplement, March 5, 1982)

How does she hear a sigh from the page? Why does she imagine orchard starlight? Sitting in her chair in a lighted room she does not see the orchard starlight, and yet, of course, she does "see" it. When the evocative power of the text and the reader's imaginative power meet, the reader can respond to the siren call of the faraway places and gladly go to them.

> In actual life our experience is inevitably restricted both by the limitations imposed by circumstances and by our own character. No one person can ever know in practice what it is like to be both a man and a woman, a mystic and a materialist, a criminal and a pillar of society, an ancient Roman and a modern Russian. But books can teach us to be all these things in imagination. Every reader is a Lady of Shallot, who, secluded in his secret chamber, forgets the hours, as he sits watching the endless procession of human thought and passion and action, as it

> passes, motley and tumultuous, across the gleaming mirror of literature. (Cecil, 1957, p. 15)

This is another kind of space that reading gives to us, the opportunity to transcend time and place, to walk for a time in someone else's shoes and see with other eyes. Life is a matter of constantly being in the world but not of it; that is, of affecting and being affected by people and events, yet aware of my individual self as both a part of and apart from the world. Always I see through the lenses of my own personality, my experience, and my beliefs. Through my imagination, guided and inspired by The Mountain is Young, I can envision life in Nepal, particularly for one very unhappily married Englishwoman. The vision may be incomplete, seen through a glass darkly, but real and illuminating all the same. An invisible world is viewed. The image created by the reader's imagination encountering the text moves to fill in the space left by the text alone.

Reading for understanding is a much more active process than reading for information.

> If you remember what an author says, you have learned something from reading him. If what he says is true, you have learned something about the world. But whether it is a fact about the book or the world, you have gained nothing but information if you have exercised only your memory. You have not been enlightened. That happens only when, in addition to knowing what an author says, you know what he means and why he says it.
>
> In a sense being informed is a prerequisite to being enlightened. The point, however, is not to stop at being informed. It is as wasteful to read a great book solely for information as to use a fountain pen for digging worms. (Adler, 1940, p. 34)

For that understanding beyond information to occur, the imagination of the reader must be engaged. And the view or vision of other lives must begin to be created.

And how does that happen? One necessity is that the writer's imagination must be involved; the writer must have a vision to share.

> No matter how much experience we may gather in life, we can never in life get the dimension of experience that the imagination gives us. Only the arts and sciences can do that, and of these, only literature gives us the whole sweep and range of human imagination as it sees itself. It seems to be very difficult for many people to understand the reality and intensity of literary experience. . . . Shakespeare's plays weren't produced by his experience: they were produced by his imagination, and the way to develop the imagination is to read a good book or two. (Frye, 1963, p. 42)

The spiral nature of the process here becomes apparent. Writers are also readers. So partly through reading the writer's imagination is engaged, the vision is created, or broadened, extended, intensified. From the insight and perhaps the inspiration born of the reading, the author adds imagination and the creativity that is a necessity in writing of worth to form another vision that can be shared with other readers—if they will use their own imaginations to see it. And so this spiral becomes another manifestation of the circle of understanding.

For readers must participate in creating the insight. "Understanding should be developed to the point at which the reader becomes the co-author" (Jenkinson, 1966, p. 4). "The reader is himself a novelist. Through his imagination he re-creates the imagined real world darkly shadowed forth by the black words on the white page" (Lever, 1961, p. 44). The author can provide the shell of the vision, the text can become the model, the clay mold of it, but the reader must breathe life into it. Visions, ideas, hopes and dreams live only in the mind. Without a dreamer and a thinker they perish. And without a vision and hope, there is no thought and no dream.

Each reader sees the text's vision through personal experience and interpretation which are unique, but nevertheless have enough commonality to allow ideas to be shared and to enable the reader to be lifted beyond the confines and boundaries of personal experience and physical circumstances. Ultimately, imagination becomes the only avenue whereby any of us can move beyond the sphere of our own personal human solitude and share in another's vision of life.

In personal interaction this sharing can happen with another individual with whom we are in geographical and psychological proximity, but only through reading is the whole range of human experience and vision available to us.

> Literature as a whole . . . the range of articulate human imagination as it extends from the height of imaginative heaven to the depth of imaginative hell. Literature is a human apocalpyse, man's revelation of man, and criticism is not a body of adjudications, but the awareness of that revelation, the last judgement of mankind. (Frye, 1963, p. 44)

"Man's revelation to man"—without which our lives would be solitary and stagnant pools. Who would want to live with only those thoughts and visions that are entirely self-generated? We know the despair of being trapped in our own thoughts, especially when they are old and have been thought before. Revelation is essential spiritual food. It is even necessary to make us aware of what we share with others.

> The imagination is also the great unifier of humanity because it concerns itself with order, patterns and archetypes. The imagination does not see things as being disparate, separate, unconnected; it sees wholes, the relationships between parts. It is thus that it creates meaning in life and shows us something of the underlying unity of existence. (Brown, 1971, p. 47)

No one life by itself can, in its physical contacts, have that wholeness. Only in intersubjectivity and in imaginatively pushing the horizons as wide as possible can wholeness and shared humanity emerge. Only thus can the patterns and meanings become visible. It is common to think an experience, particularly a painful one, unique (nobody else ever suffered as I have), until a deeper awareness and understanding of the experiences of others reveals the pattern. This conviction of isolation in difficult experience is most common amongst children and teenagers who have not yet lived long enough or read enough to appreciate the universality of the experience and to have seen the "unity of existence," or to have had the experience of their own solitude touching that of another. A text can start to clarify these patterns of life, not develop them completely, but serve as a map to point the way.

> The formulated text . . . represents a pattern, a structured indicator to guide the imagination of the reader; and so the meaning can only be grasped as an image. The image provides the filling for what the textual pattern structures but leaves out. Such a 'filling' represents a basic condition of communication. (Iser, 1978, p. 9)

These "structured indicators" are not to be mistaken for precise and tidy categories that will neatly pigeonhole everything. Images are too much alive and too intertwined for that. A nest of squirming kittens does not pigeonhole or categorize well. In that very resistance to rigidity lies much of the joy and the intrigue of ideas, images and visions.

> Children's books are as difficult to classify as English rivers, which refuse to be divided tidily into counties or into any recognized regional groupings. Like the rivers, they overflow their boundaries and meander through the counties of the mind. (Eyre, 1971, p. 13)

So too, adult books, any text. "Way leads on to way." Rather the text gives the imagination a bit of structure and guidance to assist it in the large task of building images, seeking always the holy grail of meaning and sense.

Meaning and image are not static. With each coming together of text and reader there is opportunity for growth or shift. When thoughts remain the same, they become stagnant and lose their vitality, like a routine action endlessly and mindlessly repeated. Rather than viewing an image as some sort of abstract object, a more appropriate metaphor may be a form of life and liveliness. "An image is _a certain type of consciousness_. An image is an act, not some thing. An image is a consciousness _of_ some thing" (Sartre, 1962, p. 146). This view of image illuminates Iser's statement that meaning is an image. Meaning involves a consciousness of something: a consciousness starting with experience, of using experience to see ideas, of formulating ideas into structures and fleshing out the structures with the experiences that gave birth to the ideas in the first place. Another circle of understanding.

An example of the extension of the reader's vision from the experienced to the unknown is given by Bachelard in his discussion on houses and how we dream of living in many places. All of us have experience with houses, but not necessarily with all possible types of houses. What is it like to live in a palace? Not being royal, how can we know? Bachelard speaks of "our cottage moments and our palace moments," and adds, "And when reading has given us countless inhabited places, we know how to let the dialectics of cottage and manor sound inside us" (1964, p. 63). And what we come to understand about cottage and palace is not only the obvious contrasts in size, furnishings and luxuriousness, but also that the cottage may be cozy or the palace cold, and for all their differences, they may share the essence of home if they are places which their residents cherish well and to which they return gladly. The sense that while the material possessions differ greatly one cannot generalize from possessions to quality of relationships or to degrees of happiness with one's home is an understanding well worth the having. (And in addition, interpreting "cottage moments and palace moments" metaphorically raises a whole new set of interesting possibilities.)

Such insights are more likely to come if Lever's advice is followed: "A reader should not 'look for' specific points in reading a novel; he should enter the imagined world and live through an experience" (1961, p. 50). Live through the experience. That is where the satisfaction of reading lies for the reader.

And now we have the possibility of coming full circle. When a reader gains insight and a broader, clearer vision, and is able to see the patterns and wholeness, that understanding becomes a part of who the reader is and how that reader lives and relates to others. If then the reader in addition to (or perhaps instead of?) living out the vision turns to writing, there is now a new group of readers, and the spiral continues. For that reader/writer who can see "into" and "through," who can learn and understand, and then integrate vision and being, there is a life of wholeness and healing—of integrity.

> Integrity has to do with vision that helps the writer to discover, and then to give order to the discovery. Joyce Cary says that is the duty of the writer to give to the reader 'the same discovery, to make him feel what is meant.' But Cary adds, 'The

> writer, in short, has to find some meaning in life before he gives it to us in a book.' (Hess, 1978, p. 147)

Some pieces of text leave the reader with the impression that the writer has not found meaning in life first. The writer may be reporting an event or an experiment, but seems not to have been able to make an interpretation of its place, significance or meaning in its field of study, and hence the text lacks direction and integrity. The sharing of meaning with integrity is the generous gift of the creative writer. Our own experience is reconfirmed and clarified, as well as extended.

> Jeff: The creative artist takes the private world and makes it accessible to us. The creative writer draws us into a different world and presents us with a different vision. In a sense the writer takes the scales away from our eyes, so that once we see it, we say, 'Yes, that world that the artist is revealing is a world I have experienced, but I haven't had the words or the imagery to see it, but now that it's shown to me I can see it.' That's the unique social role of the artist, to see more clearly, to have the vision.. It's the old role of the prophet. The prophet sees earlier and more clearly what the rest of us can see after he's shown us.
>
> To some degree all of us are artists. The day-dreaming youngsters in school who are wool-gathering and off in a world of their own while we're trying to teach them how to spell. 'rhythm'—everybody has profound imaginative capacities. Artists' perceptions are just keener.
>
> My vision is awfully prosaic. That's I think why I read. If I didn't read, my world would be a very conventional middle-class world.

To be lifted not only out of the prosaic, but out of "the labryinthian ways of my own mind," is not only an attraction of reading, but at times a necessity. Not only out of middle-class conventions, but out of self-centredness. And having been shaken at least partially from our ruts, perhaps we can see over the top of them enough to see the direction the prophets are pointing.

> The surest thing there is is we are riders,
> And though none too successful at it, guiders.
> (Frost, 1972, p. 216)

In teaching or writing, or many other human relationships, "guiding" is an apt term for what we are about. With the vision of the prophet or the poet more clearly in mind, our guiding may become a little more successful.

Part of the prophetic gift seems to be an ability to participate and observe simultaneously, to see on two levels at once. The prophet can thus participate in and seek to influence events, but at the same time stand back and make order of the scene, sense the direction of the flow of events and the probable outcomes. That vision is helpful to those of us who find it difficult to do both at once or who are not particularly able observers. And to lack insight as an observer is always to risk participating in an inappropriate or harmful way. Britton (1969) has distinguished between the participant role in which we live and interact and the spectator role in which we step back and extend our perspective. Reading provides opportunity to be spectators without any compulsion to intervene. Perhaps this is why it is so easy to be mature and reasonable about situations in novels, but so easy to be irritated by petty matters in daily life. As spectators we can stand back and consider without having our toes stepped on while we're standing still. One purpose of reading may be to build up our store of good sense, of appropriate actions and evaluations to be called upon when we are participants in a situation.

To live one's life only as a spectator would be ultimately rather pointless. Its value lies in its temporary nature. And being a spectator does not necessarily imply being distant and detached. What is it we experience as reader-spectators? When I read A Tale of Two Cities and see clearly and coolly that Sydney Carton's character flaws are of his own making and rather silly, yet I also see the genuine humanity of the man and care what happens to him, I am a spectator, but how detached? Is my understanding of my own humanity any different for having known Sydney Carton? I watch Brutus struggling with his conscience over Julius Caesar and see him making wrong choices for noble reasons; I have secret and amused sympathy with Cassius' cynicism yet despise how he uses it to manipulate Brutus. Overtones of Watergate. What is the impact of individual personalities on political structures? Of structures on individuals? As I reflect this way, what is the measure of involvement or detachment? Is my understanding of human nature, of social and political structures, of myself, any different?

"Much reading does put the reader in a generally dual condition of being at once a participant in the action and a detached spectator of it." We can feel a particular emotion as we read and yet watch ourselves experiencing it, fully aware of what we are doing. We can also feel intense involvement, in a thrill sense, in a story such as a detective story, but not care deeply at all. On the other hand, we can read a serious novel about which we feel more detached, but which nevertheless involves us very deeply, moves us, gives rise to serious thinking, and affects our vision of the world (Slatoff, 1970, pp. 39-41).

This opportunity for some degree of simultaneous involvement and detachment may enable us to be a little more prophetic. And in enabling us to move freely between the two and use one to facilitate the other, it builds yet another circle of understanding and gives another impetus toward wholeness.

One way of elucidating this concept further has been given by Binswanger whose professional pursuits included the interesting combination of practising psychiatry and writing literary criticism. In his writing based on Heidegger's Being and Time, Binswanger (as reported by Magliola, 1977) described the "experiential circle" which he called koinonia and applied to both literary texts and clinical patients. The experiential circle is a kind of consciousness. Imagination becomes the link since imagination discloses consciousness and imagination controls literature. Binswanger described the experiential circle as having three functions: (1) it merges subjectivity and objectivity. Binswanger regarded it as normal and healthy not to make this distinction constantly but to circle effortlessly from the self to the outside and back without objectifying the outside or subjectifying the self. "The healthy person in day-to-day activity does not dichotomize consciousness into subject and objects, . . . but rather experiences being-in-the-world" (Magliola, 1958, p. 59). (2) It merges body and soul, a unity regarded by Binswanger as essential for healthy human life. Merleau-Ponty appears to support this view with his statement that ". . . the soul is not merely in the body like a pilot in his ship; it is wholly intermingled with the body. The body, in turn, is wholly animated, and all its functions contribute to the perception of objects . . ." (Merleau-Ponty, 1964a, p. 5). The example that Magliola uses for this function is that of the incarnation of Christ. He quotes Gerard Manley Hopkins: ". . . Christ plays in ten thousand places,/lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his/To the Father through the features of men's faces" (p. 59). Experientially we think of ourselves as one unit, not a matched set of pieces. And even modern medicine recognizes the interaction of body and spirit. And finally, (3) the experiential circle merges past and present. What is the present but a continuation of the past? As Faulkner so succintly said, "The past is not dead; it is not even past." Surely our experience is that the past and present flow together, and that we think and act today as a continuation of yesterday. The ability to circle easily between self and the world, to unite body and soul, to see the past alive and active in the present can be facilitated in reading.

This drive toward integration, toward knitting together the disparate strands of our lives, is another apsect of making sense, of building our vision, not only of what is, but also of what can be. This is not easily done. In our way of life it is much easier to think of chopping one's life into pieces: work, social life, family, recreation. But the pieces refuse to stay boxed. They cry out for wholeness and healing.

> Yield who will to their separation
> My object in living is to unite
> My vocation and my avocation
> As my two eyes make one in sight.
> (Frost, 1972)

My two eyes work together to make one vision. They bring the world into the self and express the self to the world.

The imagination then is vital in seeing connections and extending our circle of understanding. "Our pragmatic culture has ignored and disparaged the imagination. This dismissal of the imagination, and ignorance of its true importance, has contributed to the fragmentation and corruption of our culture" (Warren, 1980, p. 17).

Out of this need to see more clearly, to integrate, to complete the circle, to become aware of the gaps and silences, the vision grows. "Our world is an unfinished task" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964b, p. 6).

Lost in a Book

Absorption in the world of the text is often described by readers either as an escape or as being "lost in a book." The two experiences are not necessarily the same. When the world is too much with us and the disagreeable aspects of the day press us round too closely, there is a compelling urge to run away. It may not be possible to leave the environment physically and even if it were, the problems would be likely to ride along as unwanted baggage filling our heads. And so the world of the imagination calls: We may escape into daydreams or into a text. They serve the purpose equally well, but as Martin observes, "It's easier with a book. Daydreams won't always come when they are wanted most."

In my desire to run quickly, it sometimes happens that I pick up some very light reading, a romance or an adventure. They appear to make lovely escapes: the women are all beautiful, the men are all very heroic or villainous, everyone is brilliant, there is lots of distracting action, and it all comes out happily ever after. Pure cliché. As Jeff said at one point, "I'm a mystery story fan. I'm reading one now and I'm eager to get home tonight and find out how it comes out.

I know that I'll probably be disappointed, but still I'll read it." The appeal of formula writing seems to be exactly that it is stereotyped and hence, predictable. One can be guaranteed a certain kind of action, a certain kind of character, and a certain kind of outcome. Known in advance, it's effortless and appealing precisely because thoughtless. It's useful for disengaging the mind, putting one's self to rest. But ultimately, disappointing, especially when used as an escape. When one's own path seems rocky, it's cold comfort to read that for other people the path is smooth and every difficulty is surmounted with unrealistic ease. The fairy tale world produces discontent by contrast. Like seeking escape in a bottle, the treatment may be more depressing than the original condition. At best, it's empty. There is no vision.

Doug describes another and perhaps more attractive form of escape reading:

> When things get bad, I escape into the sports pages. Things are so simple: you can count the number of games won and lost, figure out who's in first and who's in second. It's really easy. I like to calculate things like how far a team is moving up in the standings.

Unlike real life, "things are so simple." This of course does not mean that life is simple for the athletes who create those statistics, merely that the sports accounts are simple and are a diversion from the issues requiring a response from Doug.

But even when we start with the wish to escape, the text may be a valuable one which grapples honestly with the issues that comprise human experience. To Kill a Mockingbird shows the ugliness and pain of racial prejudice. And it offers no magic answers, no easy victories.

It does, however, show one lawyer going to court and struggling hard to defend an innocent black man when the community expects a token defence and an easy conviction. And he persists in fighting for justice in the face of strong and violent antagonism from the community. One fairly ordinary man is doing what little he can to illuminate the darkness around him. The light may be small, but the glow is nonetheless there.

In Cry, the Beloved Country the picture is starkly but sympathetically drawn of a country driven by oppression pell-mell toward violent rebellion. There are two sane and sensitive men: one is poor, rural and black, the other is white, urban and educated. They do not know each other. But they share a commitment to being brother and friend to those whose lives touch theirs. And their faith and understanding cost them dearly. The white man, who has been arguing eloquently that the poor will turn to violence unless treated fairly, is shot in his own home by one of those very poor who come to steal. The black man is forced into the pain of watching a beloved son turn in anger to robbery and murder. Tragedy there is, but also a testimonial to hope through individual faith and commitment. There is vision of what might be. The encounter with such texts is not so much escape as time-out, a chance to regain perspective and begin to make some analogies and applications to one's own life and situation. Renewed vision.

But we do not always start with the desire to escape. Those who like to read are at least as likely to read when life is going well as when it's troubled. Whatever the original motivation to pick up the book, it's equally possible to get "lost" in it.

And what does this getting lost feel like? Martin recounts an oft-told tale:

> The other evening a friend dropped in and left shortly after ten o'clock. It was too late to start anything and too early to go to bed, so I picked up a novel. Recently as part of my professional responsibilities, I've had to become acquainted with literature for adolescents, and I still have a few books piled up waiting to be read. I remember selecting the book and deciding which chair to sit in, but that's all. Two hours later I came to and there I was again in my chair in my own house. I spent those two hours in England, what's more in an England that has never existed, since the book was a fantasy of sorts. But I was there and lived fully in a community of very special people. Since there were no interruptions, nothing going bump in the night, I had during those two hours no awareness of sitting in an armchair or of being in a western Canadian city or of any actual physical circumstances. Talk about reality. What was real was nothing physical, but that non-existent English community.

Martin's experience will be very familiar to any book lover. The world of the text and the imagination becomes the reality. And I experience being in another world, never mind where my body may appear to be located.

To speak of being "lost" in a book seems to be both an apt and an inappropriate phrase. For the reader, it is inappropriate. When in my reading I am transported to another world, there is no sense of lostness at all. I know perfectly well and with great clarity just where I am. And I want to be there. Or if I don't, I know a reliable way to get home again. Just put down the book. The one thing I am not is lost. But being lost in a book is a phrase coined, not by a reader, but by an observer. The lostness is an observable state. When we come upon a person lost in a book, we can readily see that although there is a body present in the room with us, the reader is not. And that is not very comfortable—for the observer. The better we know or the more we care about the reader, the more excluded we feel. Somebody we love has gone on a marvellous journey without taking us along, indeed without telling us anything about the trip. We are left behind, abandoned. Abandonment—one of the most dreadful feelings of all. The one who is lost, then, is not the reader, but the observer. And since we cannot go where our friend the reader has gone, there is a strong urge to bring the reader back to us. That is easily done. Talk, make a noise, any distraction will do. The reader will then come back and rescue us from our lostness. There is always the risk that the reader will return irritated at being called back unnecessarily and may "escape" us again in a moment, but at least the two of us will meet again momentarily within this room. It is interesting how disturbing the observer's feeling of exclusion really is. Even in classrooms where teachers often work hard at fostering reading in children, a teacher who finds a child lost in a book is apt to interrupt. (Day-dreaming in school, of course, is unpardonable. If you must day-dream, at least stare at a book, not out the window, while you do it. And since there is no certain way for an observer to distinguish between idle dreaming and serious thinking, it's not always a good idea to think that profoundly either.) It's a tribute to the power of texts and to the imaginations of children that students sitting in hard desks in busy, distracting classrooms do still sometimes manage to get lost in a book. But in or out of school, only when the observer is also a reader and sympathetic to the magic journey can the reader hope to be left undisturbed.

We can readily consider the two states of being in the physical world or in the imaginatively created world, but how do we move between them? How do we get into or out of the elusive reality? To say how we leave is easier. Three ways. One is that which Martin experienced in his late evening reading above, "The book ended." Presumably, he could just as well have said that he finished the book. But that puts the action in a different locus. Does the reader do the finishing or does the text do the stopping? Pragmatically speaking, it comes to the same thing, but it is not the same experience. It's the difference between acting and being acted upon. If I put the book down before finishing, then it is clear that I have initiated the breaking-off. But with endings, the text takes the lead. No matter how much I am enjoying this world, nor how concertedly I will it to continue, nor how intensely I concentrate, the text stops. It proclaims very quietly but with absolute authority that there is no more. And if the text has been evocative, I feel ambivalent here. My aesthetic sense tells me that the text has ended where it should. To continue would be to weaken, not strengthen, the story or argument. The time is right, all good things come to an end, an artist can spoil a painting by cluttering it up, perfect June days have sunsets—I know all that. But I more know it than feel it. I would not want the text spoiled by rambling, but I do wish there was more. The community, the fellowship, the personalities were all too fine to lose. I don't lose them, of course, in that I can re-read and in any case they live on in my mind, but I still experience a sense of loss when the last page is reached.

A second way that I am brought out of the world of the text is by an interruption: a noise loud enough to be startling, a sound that is unexpected, a familiar sound that I know signals trouble, someone talking to me. If the interruption is commanding enough or if I am not too deeply absorbed, the transition may be made instantaneously, from full alertness in the world of the text to full alertness in the physical world in a flash. The summons can also be so abrupt as to give me a shock. But when the summons is less startling and when the world of the text is very appealing and enjoyable, there is a real sense of great reluctance to leave. The tap at my door is plainly made by someone who in seeing me sitting there reading has recognized that I am far away and must be brought back. The gentle tap or the tentative speaking is meant to do that. And when I hear it I know that I must come as summoned, that I cannot ignore the summons, and that the very fact that I am briefly considering whether I can pretend not to have heard means that the interruption has already occurred. My mind cries out, "Not now!" But acknowledging the cause to be lost, I do what little I can to delay the inevitable by grasping for another second, then raising my head slowly, perhaps with a slight frown. Then reflexive politeness takes over and I smile and welcome the intruder. This automatic social response gives my mind another few seconds to complete the journey back, adjust to the new situation, and anticipate the probable topic of conversation.

A third way I leave the world of the text is simply that I choose to leave. It no longer appeals. Or perhaps I did not ever fully enter it. I skimmed a bit, I actually attended to a few paragraphs, pussyfooting around the edge, but always guardedly, not becoming vulnerable to the text, not becoming open to the experience it provides. Perhaps I start out openly, but then decide this text has no message for me, the voice says nothing that I want to hear, and it is time to break off the dialogue. Usually with some disappointment.

Schutz (1962) speaks of the "shock" of moving into another state or province of meaning, for example the shock of falling asleep and moving into the world of dreams, or the decision of the scientist to replace the passionate attitude toward the world with a contemplative one. Each province of meaning, according to Schutz, is finite and has a specific "accent of reality." One may be inconsistent with another, and hence the passage between them is a shock.

That we are conscious of making a transition from one domain to another gives support to Schutz' view that there are different provinces of meaning with a passage between them. However, the shock seems more apparent when waking than when falling asleep, and when stopping reading than when starting. Perhaps slipping away from the daily round holds holiday overtones that are not present in the return to it?

To say how I enter the world of the text is more difficult than how I leave it. The experience is more subtle. The first step is clear: I pick up the book and open it. But the problem with considering the actual moment of entry is that it's like the actual moment of falling asleep. If I'm conscious of it, it isn't happening.

> Martin: One evening last summer I came home to an empty house. It was already dark but someone had left a lamp turned onto the lowest setting. As I walked across the livingroom in the dim light I saw a paperback novel—it was Troika, a spy

> story—that I hadn't seen before, and I picked it up intending to read the cover or the introduction just to see what it was about. Three-quarters of an hour later I found myself sitting on the ledge of the fireplace on cold hard bricks straining my eyes in the dim light. There was a comfortable easy chair about four feet away and a good reading lamp literally within arm's reach. I did not, as far as I can remember, ever decide to start reading that book. It just happened. At the point where I became aware of what I was doing, I did decide whether or not to continue, although I must say that wasn't much of a decision. It's by no means a great book, but once you're into a fast-paced high-action spy story, who puts it down? I was hooked. But at least I got some decent light.

In Ted Sorensen's biography of John F. Kennedy, there is an anecdote in which the high-ranking White House staff came close to panic one afternoon because they suddenly discovered they'd lost the president. He had walked out of someone's office approximately an hour before but had not arrived at his own. But as soon as they put down their telephones and started to look, they found him. In walking along the corridor he'd spotted a magazine on a hall table, sat down right there and read. Or that experience being what it is, he probably read first and sat down without realizing it. According to those who knew him well, this pattern of becoming sidetracked into reading on the spot was not unusual with Kennedy, a voracious reader. But again, it was his staff who thought him lost, not he who felt lost.

In both the preceding accounts there is a noticeable involuntary aspect. The text takes over, almost possesses, the reader. The reader certainly allows this to happen. No one who refuses to read or actively resists involvement has this experience of being over-taken. But the text seems to take the initiative and direct the encounter, at least at first.

It is not always that easy for the reader to strike up a conversation, however. Sometimes, typically in Victorian novels, the text begins in a very leisurely way, and the reader must be patient and wait to see what sort of dialogue will emerge. And if the text is difficult but the reader truly wishes or needs to understand it, an act of the will may be necessary. An analogy may be drawn from Spurling's examination of the act of going to sleep.

> The body is an 'expressive unity', in which causal and intentional structures are integrated to a greater or lesser degree. The body is the medium in which this dialectic between causality and intentionality is accomplished. For example, if I wish to go to sleep, I lie down in bed, close my eyes, breathe slowly and play act going to sleep. There finally arrives a moment when sleep 'comes', and I am taken over by a process over which I have little direct control. Hence the body's role is one which 'transforms ideas into things, and my mimicry of sleep into real sleep. The body can symbolize existence because it brings it into being and actualizes it.' (Spurling, 1977, p. 45)

Just as I may go to sleep by first play-acting sleep, so I may begin to read by assuming I will read and engaging in reading behaviour. And in reading, too, "causal and intentional structures are integrated" to some degree. And so on the one hand it is possible to argue that one enters the world of the text in one of two ways: deliberately or involuntarily. But perhaps upon closer examination the two are not really antithetical. The reader must in either case be willing. But some readers have more preparation and enthusiasm for meeting a particular text, and some texts have more spaces and more open invitations to enter. So the meeting may require more or less work, but always there is the intention of the reader to read and of the text to be read. And although Martin spoke earlier as if the text took over the situation, he was nevertheless willing to read and indeed exhibited intention by picking up the book and staying with it.

If he was a captive, he was a very willing, even deliberate, captive. Being "lost in a book," unlike other forms of lostness, is an intentional act.

The Inner Life

Why is it that we so eagerly seek this world in the mind? What is the relationship to everyday living? Heather makes one clear connection:

> From childhood, reading has been sort of a magic carpet leading to so many delightful experiences in the mind. I had the feeling at times when the children were small and I was busy with household tasks that I didn't have time to read. On one occasion I was put to bed with the flu and I had the delightful feeling that now I could read. I realized that it's not good when I don't allow myself to read. It almost had something to do with getting sick because I had been neglecting that part of myself. Maybe I exaggerated that, but I feel it's very desert-like without reading. That was especially so when I was bringing up little children and there were many repetitive tasks.

The spirit needs food just as the body does and is just as likely to suffer from malnutrition. Not all of that food comes through reading, but that is a powerful way to sustain the inner life. And to heighten our consciousness of realities beyond the mundane. Heather's relief when she again permitted herself to read has about it the tone of meeting an intense need, like permitting oneself to stop work for a cold drink on a hot day. Prolonged absence leads to illness. Her references to illness and the desert show not only the barrenness of reading's absence, but also how basic and essential reading is to her very existence.

While Heather felt a need to break out of the routine of her daily round, Jeff expresses it as a need to be reminded of more significant realities.

> Everyday life is interesting, but it's misleading. The small satisfactions such as walking the dog are anesthetizing in the sense that it's easy to lose sight of some fundamental realities, the most fundamental of which is that it is not our lot to enjoy everyday satisfactions forever. Our existence is finite and for some involves suffering. It's easy to lose sight of that in a prosperous city like this where everything is new and growing. But everyday life is a very sharply bounded set of experiences, and a good text helps us break out of those bounds.

This inner life is not something separate from, or in addition to, everyday life, not some sort of extra luxury which some people can afford. It is a very real aspect of everyday life; and while it is not visible to another person as our routine actions (eating, going to work) are, it is at the heart of our being, where we are most truly at home. Because it cherishes and fosters ideas and ideals, hopes and desire, it influences the story we see ourselves living out: how we see ourselves in the world, the goals for which we strive, and the relationships we seek with others.

Because this inner world is invisible, it can be as private as I wish it to be. Part of being a well-adjusted adult is judging how public or private an occasion is and adapting our actions and words to the appropriate degree of "publicness." This inner life is very private. On the right occasion (i.e. with the right person), elements of it may be shared. Just as inviting someone into my home is an act of friendship and self-revelation, so to invite someone into my inner world is an act of disclosure and vulnerability. It can probably never be fully shared even if I wanted it to be. Which is most unlikely. Aspects of it yes, but not all. And here is an ambivalence in human life. To exclude others totally from the inner world is to be lonely. But to admit them totally would be too much loss of self.

Some balance between the extremes seems the best we can do.

And therein lies the value of reading. The text is admissable. It opens itself and allows me to see past the teacups and coats, as Alice expressed it earlier, into the private world of the characters. That entry enables me to respond in a variety of ways such as Betty's consideration of whether she would have the commitment Connor had, or Nancy's writing herself into the story. Such thinking happens in my own private world. If the text expresses attitudes or ideas with which I have no sympathy I may reject it. But even the rejection occurs on the basis of private world values. If the text really speaks to me, it can enter in a very full and influential way and becomes a major contributor to and developer of the spirit that sustains me.

In this inner life, more than in routine actions, is my vision/version of truth and reality. The anaesthesia, as Jeff terms it, is lifted to allow fuller consciousness and consideration of what really matters to me.

And here is an interesting paradox. Reading appears to be both an escape from reality and a revelation of reality. But that same statement rephrased no longer seems paradoxical: reading is an opportunity to move outside the bounds of personal routine and an opportunity to think about the fundamental realities that underlie daily experiences.

The reality/truth sought in reading is not necessarily a picture of actual literal experience, nor of something that we would want to have happen to us. Cecil suggests that experiences which would be boring or dreadful if actually lived through are entertaining and a matter of delight in fiction. For example, it would be horrifying to know someone who was living out King Lear's story. "A work of art is certainly not delightful as it mirrors a delightful phase of experience" (1957, p. 16).

Tolkien expresses a similar understanding about children's literature and the concerns of children.

> The story-maker makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed.
>
> . . . at no time can I remember that the enjoyment of a story was dependent on belief that such things could happen, or had happened in 'real life'. Fairy stories were plainly not primarily concerned with possibility, but with desirability. If they awakened _desire_, satisfying it while often whetting it unbearably, they succeeded.
>
> . . . The dragon had the trademark _Of Faerie_ written plain upon him . . . Of course, I in my timid body did not wish to have them in the neighbourhood . . . This is, naturally, often enough what children mean when they ask: 'Is it true?' They mean: 'I like this, but is it contemporary? Am I safe in my bed?' The answer: 'There is certainly no dragon in England today,' is all that they want to hear. (Tolkien, _Tree and Leaf_, 1965, pp. 36-41)

The worth of the reading encounter and the reality of the experience are not dependent upon whether dragons really exist nor whether we know someone undergoing King Lear's physical journey. The reality is much more subtle and profound. Does the fearsome dragon seem for the child a very real fear or danger, or a hair-raising but delicious adventure? And what of very real human greed, cruelty, compassion and suffering do we see in _King Lear_? How do these stories provoke the imagination and move us beyond the prosaic into the creative? Is it with relief, as well as challenge, that we move between the world of the text and daily life? "Imagination gives us both a better and a worse world than the one we usually live with" (Frye, 1963, p. 40).

When the art has not failed, we step into the world of the text, which Tolkien terms the Secondary World, with all the ease of Lucy, Edmund, and friends stepping through the wardrobe into Narnia. Small wonder children are not particularly surprised by that step; they take it frequently. This world of the text and the world of daily life become two great streams that feed our vision of life. From this combination of what has been, what might be, and what is, we forge the vision of what we would like and will strive for (and sometimes, such as with Gulag Archipelago, the horrors of what we would not like). Spurling has written of oral language that: "The constant flow of words, of small talk, establishes the massive reality of the common-sense world. Our talk never starts from scratch and never finishes, it is always in a process of being underway. It expresses our never-ending dialogue with the world" (1977, p. 61). While Spurling is concerned with oral language, there seems a parallel to written language. The constant flow of written words establishes the massive reality of a world beyond our limited physical experience. Our dialogue with the text also never starts from scratch and never finishes, but is always underway, and is a vital aspect of our never-ending dialogue with the world.

In a study of able adult readers, Gray (1956) found that this dialogue was not only carried on by readers, but was seen as vital. Among the characteristics readers evidenced were: reading was an inseparable part of day-to-day living; they had a vital interest in people, places and problems outside the sphere of their daily life and reading was a focal interest beyond needs; the readers recognized the value of reading as an aid to individual growth; and they expressed an interest in the search for a better life and a better society. What emerges from these characteristics is a clear emphasis of being carried beyond the prosaic and on nourishing the private vision and the inner life.

The reading dialogue not only creates a private world, but confirms it, by the comparison it encourages with the private worlds of others. Yvonne speaks of that experience.

> Sometimes I think that reading fiction and poetry works to dispel some of the private loneliness. I need to validate my perceptions. It's the idea of 'Yes, I've felt that too.' For me, reading breaks down the barriers between my private world and the public reality. When another private world is presented to me, I get the sense that it's part of the larger human reality and that there is a lot I share with it.

Even in the privacy of a partially unshareable world we are carried back to the realization, and the comfort, of our shared humanity.

In the stillness of the private world we are able to see with "the inward eye which is the bliss of solitude." This eye is somewhat blinkered by the bustle of routine activity, but in solitude it focuses more clearly. And it may focus outward allowing reflection upon others and events, or inward upon me, my personality and place in the universe. But the private and public worlds are not discrete entities, as the inward eye quickly shows. "My place in the world" is already a uniting of the two. In the solitude I can, if I wish, withdraw somewhat, enjoy the solitude, "come apart and rest awhile."

Or I may speculate about myself and others, the situations and events which shape people, the effects of personal choices we make. Or I can imagine alternate courses of action for situations I face and consider the implications of each. At this point any such "action" is reversible, and hence any possibility the imagination can suggest can be freely considered. Any of these reflections can take place without benefit of text, but they are frequently initiated as the imagination is stimulated by the encounter with the text. Possibilities not immediately apparent are generated by the text.

The freedom to consider any actions the imagination can conjure up becomes interesting. Imagination "is the power of constructing possible models of human experience . . . Anything goes that is imaginatively possible, but nothing really happens" (Frye, 1963, p. 5). The action when finally taken has a chance of being more reasoned and appropriate than if done impulsively. Schutz distinguishes between (overt) working and (covert) performing on the basis that if mental operations, such as mentally solving a problem are unsatisfactory, they can be annulled. They are revocable, since no trace remains in the world. But with working, the world is altered by the work. It may be possible to use countermoves to return some things to their original state, but the work cannot be undone (1962, p. 217).

Such operations as solving a mathematical problem can certainly be cancelled or erased when they are seen not to work. But the same is not true of a story once heard, or an image once pictured. They may indeed be forgotten eventually, but they cannot be cancelled at will. Have we not all heard horrifying or malicious stories that we would like to forget but that pop into our minds at inopportune times? Many a child has unfortunately learned that the giant snake coiled beneath the basement stairs, once imagined, is most reluctant to leave—remaining in spite of the child's certain knowledge that it is not there. The image has its adult forms that are just as difficult to escape. The images are not necessarily terrifying, either. They may simply be dull and constraining, or they may present an objectionable world which, for example, glorifies cruelty and abusive behaviour. "The images of life and its meaning, given us by all sorts of media, harden and form a rigid shell within which we smother and suffer" (Warren, 1980, p. 17). What we read does influence our vision. Jeff speaks of writers that he chooses not to read because he finds their vision of the world offensive.

> Ayn Rand has a certain vision of the world that I frankly reject. It's a vision which disturbs and upsets me, which I find fundamentally ungenerous and illiberal. If I accepted that vision as a correct vision of life then I'd rather not live. I feel that strongly about it.

Similarly, Slatoff is critical of what he regards as a major incongruity in literature, such as "totalitarian clamors for freedom like those of Ayn Rand and Mickey Spillane" or violence claiming to be an expression of love (1970, p. 157), as in the science fiction stories in which earthlings arriving on another planet proclaim a coming in peace and goodwill but use their lethal lasers on anything that moves.

The warning implicit in these statements is confirmed by Paul who, although he reads voraciously, says that there are a great many mundane publications in his own field that he has not read, and he is inclined to regard that as an asset. To clutter his mind with junk may not only be useless, but actually harmful. Slatoff (1970) observes that when the author's vision is too limited or warped, we find the text unsatisfying. In Huckleberry Finn we are sensitized to Jim's view and feelings, and therefore find the teasing of Jim at the end, unacceptable. Animated cartoons can only be tolerated if one can reject all awareness of cats and watch them be flattened. Slatoff's example of a highly-regarded novel such as Huckelberry Finn makes the point that even an able writer with a genuine vision to share will on occasion have too limited a vision. It is Twain's very success in portraying the characters of Huck and Jim earlier in the story that make the later section disappointing when the depth of insight is not sustained.

This view that reading is not necessarily an unqualified good thing has not been very commonly held in current education where teachers have been inclined to say that it does not matter very much what children are reading, just so they read. The argument has been that a child who does not read will not develop the habit, whereas one who does may progress from poorer to better literature. Certainly, there is a developmental factor involved here and children go through phases of enjoying literature that by adult standards is rather inadequate (Superman, the Hardy Boys). But to argue that it does not matter what children read as long as they read seems rather like arguing that coke and chips are just as good as fruit and vegetables, as long as they eat. That seems as much spiritual nonsense as it is nutritional nonsense. With some guidance children can be encouraged to read both widely and wisely, while not imposing censorship.

"Art, Tolstoy said, should inspire. Anything that stops short of spiritual enlightenment fails the first standard of good art" (Hess, 1978, p. 145). Spiritual enlightenment does not entail moralizing, but rather insight-giving and vision-building.

> Jeff: For me, good writing has to be some sort of vision that human beings are potentially noble. Not that they are noble and not that characters are noble, but some sense of potential nobility, that people are sometimes selfless, sometimes interested in someone else's welfare, sometimes willing to give up material things to pursue other ends.

What we seek is not some kind of mindless Pollyanna chatter, but more like a glimmer of light in the distance, a reason to believe that the human potential is there. Sydney Carton, for all his weakness, ends well. For him, too, "nothing in his life became like the leaving it."

Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed tells the story of a group of very ordinary people in an insignificant little French village who quietly but vividly demonstrated some of that nobility. During World War II while under Nazi rule they sheltered and guided to safety many Jews. The villagers were weak and powerless and just as able as millions of other Europeans to plead that they could do nothing against the overwhelming power of the Nazis and besides their own lives would be severely endangered. The only thing different about this village was that they followed the lead of an unusual couple, a priest and his wife, who dared to take action. And the incentive to action was born directly of the priest's commitment to living out the love of God, and then to rejecting utterly anti-Semitism, murder and injustice. Believing the current law to be unjust, the villagers acted in contravention of it, but non-violently. Unlike many an underground group, they did not seek weapons and fight back. They did not try to kill their conquerors, but rather to save what lives they could. They simply took the positive action they believed right. For the priest, Andre Trocme, it was very much a case of, "So help me, God, I can do no other." And certainly they were in danger and had to face the consequences of their actions. While there was high tension in the experience, it was all done quietly, and for many years after the war the story was not widely known. But it is what Jeff asks for: an indication that people are sometimes selfless and do sometimes pursue a much higher good than material gain. And it is a very cogent challenge to all the rest of us who feel that we are too small and weak to tackle the big issues and who tend to plead helplessness in the face of national and international actions (such as the stockpiling of nuclear weapons). Perhaps what we need is not more power, but more vision of the potential nobility and more commitment to living it out in a small way—keeping the candle flickering.

This view does not suggest an absence of horror in literature. Frye makes the point with reference to the scene in King Lear in which Gloucester's eyes are put out on stage. It's horrifying. How can it be entertaining? "It would be degrading to watch a real blinding scene, and far more so to get any pleasure out of watching it." Frye suggests that in this scene we are seeing from the point of view of the imagination, cruelty and hatred which we know are very real in human life. "What the imagination suggests is horror, not the paralyzing sickening horror of a real blinding scene, but an exuberant horror, full of the energy of repudiation. This is as powerful a rendering as we ever get of life as we don't want it" (1963, p. 41).

Maybe. The scene is certainly horrifying. And it's instructive to compare the horror felt in such a scene with that felt in reading Gulag Archipaelago. The latter causes more of the "sickening horror" since, although it now presents itself to us as literature, we know that there is a very great deal of lived reality behind it. But just as a little light is drowned out by the sun but shows in the darkness, so often the potential nobility shows most clearly through the human darkness.

Jeff points out that our vision of life is created by our experiences, including reading, and then is what we look for in our lives and reading. So the two strengthen each other. For Heather that wholeness and the confirmation of her own vision are important.

> It's meaningful to me to find something that echoes what I feel is important, that through my life I've come to recognize as basic to my beliefs. It's tremendous to meet across time a mind that recognizes a similar truth, in spite of a different culture and so on. That's thrilling. I couldn't perhaps talk about some things to my children or my friends. They might do me the favour to listen, but they'd have nothing to say. There would be no real dialogue about it. Then to pick up a book and find this idea or feeling I have about life is marvellous. It's a kind of verification.

It is indeed. The pleasure is very great in finding that someone else, especially if that someone is a writer who is known and respected, thinks similarly to me. And this is probably especially so if, as Heather says, the topic or idea is one I do not feel free to discuss with friends.

But there can be something of a circular effect created, whereby we may choose texts that do support our views. It is perhaps natural and fairly easy to seek a text that "marshall'st me the way that I way going." Or in any case I tend to make interpretations that fit in with my vision. That strengthens those views and I use them to interpret actions. So in both reading and external experiences I find what I am looking for. To some extent we find our own truths.

> It is a truism that we shall find nothing in books which has no existence in ourselves . . . . Aldous Huxley tells us that 'Writers influence their readers, preachers their auditors, but always, at bottom, to be more themselves.' But how do they know what they themselves are? Is not that what they are reading books to find out? (Davies, 1961, p. 14)

We do sometimes find aspects of our vision that we had not previously been consciously aware of, but that were nonetheless there, as we realize by the sense of rightness the text gives. But other readers may also find something of themselves, perhaps by making somewhat different interpretations or by choosing different texts. Heather expressed both enthusiasm for the verification of her experience that she finds in text and at the same time concern and puzzlement over the different interpretations her son makes.

> My son approaches a book very differently than I do. His philosophy is different than mine, and he's had different experiences, of course. But he finds some of his truths in books, and they're sometimes things I think are not true. His position on some issues I really regret. But somebody has written about it, it confirms his view, and to him that's a truth. That one stumps me. But, of course, there are also interpretations we agree on.

Texts have probably been written supporting every possible view of every possible subject. So it is not surprising to be able to find our own views printed in a book. And of course, being in print says nothing about truthfulness. Heather is a well-read woman who is very much aware that there is no necessary correlation between printedness and truthfulness. Yet even well-read and knowledgeable people who know better experience a tendency to feel that if it's in print it's true—

or at least, more likely to be true. Print carries authority. Typewriting, hand-writing and oral language have a gradually lessening likelihood of being accepted as truthful at face value. The more permanence, the more accuracy. This is at least partially a result of the way we were schooled. How often were we told by teachers to find the "proof" of our statements in the book? And how triumphant we felt when we could point to the sentence that supported us. As adults we routinely settle disagreements by resorting to print. We look in the dictionary, the atlas or the encyclopedia and verify the facts. This is most noticeable by contrast with non-literate cultures in which arguments cannot be so resolved. In such situations the "truth" is apt to reside with either the person who is held in most respect (often the elders) or the person who argues most aggressively. If that seems to us a very unstable truth criterion, it is no more so than using the writing instrument as a criterion. The warning for teachers is clear. The school textbook is not an error-free tablet of stone. Children should not be taught the "point and prove" method of seeking truth. Critical thought is essential.

It is to be expected that Heather and her son may choose different texts or in interpreting the same text may agree on some ideas and disagree on others. But there are rather strict limits to this process. As Heather's experience attests, it really is pleasant to find verification in texts. However, we dare not set out looking for it. To do so is to ride roughshod over the voice of the text, to refuse to listen to it and to simply insist dogmatically on our own views. That is a certain path to misinterpretation. To find verification, all unaware, is quite different, however. The circle mentioned earlier of using life to determine what to expect in reading and using reading to set expectations of life, can become a vicious circle. We can become completely closed to alternate or additional views and simply go on finding what we already "know" to be so. That vicious circle is possible, but not necessary.

For we do not read only for validation. As noted earlier, a major purpose for reading is a desire to be lifted out and beyond the routine, the prosaic, the already known. I am aware that my vision is limited and hence so are the alternatives available to me. Schutz (1962) has observed that the subjectively determined elements of interest at a particular time give rise to doubt and deliberation which end only when a choice is made. But the choice can only be made from those alternatives which are available. To extrapolate further from Schutz, in a particular decision-making situation there are often alternatives in existence that are not available to us because we do not know about them. Our experience is too limited. And so sociologists report that many parents who abuse and batter their children were once abused children themselves. Their experience with parents and role models of parenthood are too limited and though they may in saner moments wish to behave differently, they lack vivid, personal examples of other ways to handle children. They are left with the familiar alternative. So with many areas of life.

Reading can vastly extend the alternatives available to us by providing us with different examples. And those examples with which we fill our minds from the texts we choose become part of our vision and hence of what we look for in our lives and seek to do. If Ricoeur is correct that to change our imaginations is to change our lives, then the change can be made for the better as well as the worse. The examples can inspire and provide enlightenment—as long as some doubt remains. To be absolutely certain of holding the truth is to be closed-minded, unable to learn, and therefore, ultimately, wrong. Teachers need to claim a certain authority through their knowledge as their right to teach. But they, like all other readers, must be conscious that the knowledge is not final and complete. "The teacher who makes no false claims to final knowledge, but who instead sets out the evidence for others to consider, discovers himself much unsuspected truth" (Penfield, 1960, p. 283).

The doubts and limitations are always with us. The common personal experience seems to be that I walk through life wrapped in my own doubts, but seeing on the surface only that others appear to be less uncertain. I know that my steps are hesitant, even stumbling, while others appear to stride with assurance. Only when the exteriors are stripped away does it become clear that others also walk in uncertainty. The issues of concern may not be the same, but the underlying uncertainty is shared. While I struggle to make choices and be wise within the confines of my very partial knowledge and blinkered vision, others seem to be much further up the hillside where the air is clearer, the panorama much broader, and the sight keener. But this perspective turns out to be rather self-centred. I am much more aware of my doubts because I must live them out, but they are no more real and no more difficult than those of others. Truth is revealed in candle flickerings; it shines out like a great spot-light for no one. One of the compelling ways we can come out of self-absorption and realize how much our struggles are like those of others is through reading. Both in studying and in the whole of living, have we not each felt like the student who ". . . hoped still for clear-cut rules, facts to which no postscripts of doubt need be added. Students have always hoped for this. And why not? If only the truth would stand still! If understanding were absolute and knowledge were final and complete!" (Penfield, 1960, p. 276).

One of the more difficult concepts to teach students is exactly this: that our understanding is not final, that we can never rest on what we know for certain, that the postscripts of doubt are always there. But the student who begins to grasp this lesson opens the possibility of becoming a true student, of seeking the candle-flickerings of truth. Therein lies the joy.

For this is not a life of despondancy, although it will have despondancy in it. We can learn, grow in wisdom and understanding—reaching always to extend our vision.

> Extending one's vision is keeping a candle that flickers and almost goes out. None of us, I think, are so sure of life's direction that we don't have to be reminded from time to time that there are these potentials and possibilities. There are standards to try to live up to.
>
> To be a person and to live a life is a mystery. We get glimmers, we have insights, but they're never so sure that we can sit back. At least for me that's the way life is. Other people seem to live life much more confidently.

But other people only seem more confident. Jeff was nearer right before: "none of us are so sure . . ." Extending the vision in the midst of uncertainty contains an inconspicuous but very great benefit:

it makes faith and hope absolutely necessary—removing any chance we might try to live without them.

Envision

Where there is no vision, the people perish.
No vision, emptiness
no story
without example
what to do
how to be
shell

Images, visible
though not with eyes
active, alive
in the life-line of the mind
vivid, vibrant
being

Slender step of deep red rose
Grip it and be pierced by thorn
Open-handed, velvet petals rest against the palm

Cling closed to here and now, find vacuum
firm grip on empty air
Let the vision range the world, find home
Open-hearted, truth drifts against the soul

Which story am I living?
        Closed and sere?
        Deepening, fragrant?
    Hope, doubt
    Struggle, rest
    Model, aim
    Encounter

Sage and true and old in story:
    Fill the thoughts
        with what is true, noble
            just, pure
            excellent, admirable
    Where the heart is, treasure
    In the vision, being

Chapter IX

THE CIRCLE CONTINUES

The circle of understanding has many aspects in the experience of reading, as has been indicated in the discussion of the various themes. The metaphor of the circle as an image for understanding is interesting, since it is able to suggest simultaneously completeness and incompleteness. When understanding is evolving, the circle is not broken; links are forged, relationships built, we circle back toward the beginning but with more insight. It is the continued and deepening relationship between reader and text that makes understanding possible. In that sense there is completeness, as conveyed by the ancient symbolism that a circle never ends. But that never-ending also connotes incompleteness. It is not possible to say that the circle is finished. Nor is understanding ever final. The concept of having completed an understanding, finished an interpretation, nailed down a piece of truth permanently, is inappropriate. Interpretation cannot be finalized forever. It is a living act, and life connotes growth and change. And so the chief characteristic of the circle becomes continuity and continued search for deeper understanding.

In the exploration of the reading encounter thus far, there have appeared certain phenomenological themes, essential to the reading experience. They interweave in the study, and are identified separately here at some risk of distortion.

One of these is temporality. Reading, of necessity, occurs across time, but it also can suspend clock time and create a very altered experience of time. Reading allows for skipping ahead or going back in text, that is, for altering our usual experience of the invariant relationships of past, present, and future, and letting each influence, as well as interpret, the others. And reading makes possible a special kind of unity that collapses time constraints and is outside the usual bondage of time.

Corporeality also is both crucial and altered. Corporeality of text is necessary, not only in that there must actually be a text for reading to occur, but also that the text must have a structure. This is not an abstract idea of text, but a particular manifestation with its own unique characteristics. Each text has its own particular and specific body and structure. The nature of that structure (its form, style, language, length, comprehensibility, content, context) is absolutely vital to the reading encounter, and may well be a decisive factor in the reader's welcoming or rejecting the text. The corporeality of the reader is equally necessary to the encounter. There must be an actual reader. To read is to read somewhere where the reader is bodily present to others. However, the corporeality of the reader may be transcended in the sense that while the physical body remains in the chair or wherever, the reader of a story, for example, may experience being present in an entirely different location and setting. A different corporeality, as well as temporality, is experienced in the creation of a new reality in the reading encounter.

Reading necessarily involves intentionality. To read is always to read something. And so the dialogue begins with the participation of text and reader kept in perspective so that one does not dictate to the other. The dialogue begins in unfamiliarity but also in anticipation. Will the circle of understanding form? If it does, what is the potential for extended experience and understanding? For dialogue with, and insights from, other readers? And for the evoking of a new world?

For world is very closely related to intentionality. When reader and text come together and form their own dialogue, they also create their own world. This is a world in which reality is altered and new meaning arises. The world may be very personal or it may be shared, at least in part, with other readers. It has the potential to be very powerful, affecting how the reader things, feels and acts. It may leave its stamp so indelibly that in Rilke's terms the reader's "features . . . remained forever different" (1977, p. 62). The world evoked in reading is an altered reality, not an unreality. It is not, except in escapism, apart from the daily routine, but rather a vital, fundamental bringing to bear of the powers of the imagination on how we live our lives. And on how we extend our circle of understanding.

As the circle continues and deepens, as fuller understanding is gained, it does not so much yield answers as generate deeper and more profound questions.

And out of any reading and study project there is always the question of where it may lead. What seems to come next? From this examination of the experience of reading, what areas look promising?

The other half of reading is writing. They necessitate each other. Reading involves a form of writing in that the reader must interpret and create understanding. Perhaps writing also involves a form of reading. Yet the experience of reading is very different from the experience of writing. What is it like to write?

How are metaphors interpreted by readers? They can be so rich, so vivid, so integral a part of both the text and the reader's imagination. But they never say exactly what they mean. Rather they create images and issue an invitation to the reader to "see through." Our daily talks, as well as our written texts, are shot through with metaphors. Apparently we appreciate them. But how do we interpret and understand them? What danger of non-communication and potential for enlightenment do they offer?

What is the effect of text structure upon the reading encounter? Does the nature or style of the text matter so much as to make widely differing encounters? Or are the underlying commonalities more important than the differences? Should we be talking about "encounters" or "the encounter"? Similarly, what significance should be placed on the individual reader and the variation from one reader to another? Both reader and text are necessary for an encounter to occur, for reading to be possible. Is focussing on individual text or reader necessary, or does such a focus alter, perhaps even destroy, the essence of reading?

Reading is a part of language. Does a consideration of the experience of reading lead inevitably to the implications of language for being human? Language seems a part of every human endeavor, but not all forms of language involve reading. In examining the reading encounter, where are the logical boundaries? What is our experience with, and understanding of, this complex symbol system? We use language not only to interpret the world, but to change the world. How does the abstract alter the concrete? Why is the pen held to be more powerful than the sword? Is it? In this interplay of symbol and substances what is reality? Does it matter? Language is so essential that it is virtually impossible even to imagine life without it. So what is our experience of language?

Context and ambiguity are two very closely interrelated and oft discussed aspects of language, especially reading. How does the reader experience them? How do we sort out ambiguities and move from tentative to firmer interpretations (or vice versa)?

What is the essence of story? What makes text a story? What is it to write, read, tell, hear a story? What is it in human nature that stories satisfy, even while creating a thirst for more?

And each theme that can be studied, can be examined again in further detail, leading, usually, to the opening up of even more issues and questions. Learning more does not lead to increased satisfaction with what we know and decreased desire to learn; learning more makes us aware of how little we know, how much remains to be asked, to be explored. Education is humbling—and more thirst-arousing than thirst-quenching. Always so much more remains to be read, interpreted, understood.

The circle continues.

Circle symbols mark the faith
    Cast the stone and waters ripple
    Rings unending join in one
    Orbits sweep through time

Circle out and inward
    In the tumbling see the power
    Waters whirling out and down
    From the breadth, the depth is drawn

Circle back to clearer focus
    Verse and chorus known ago
    Refrain repeated, join the singer
    Hear anew the song

Circle boundaries mark exclusion
    Form testudo, keep up standards
    Here no strangers, hear no news
    Only those who fit should join

Circle boundaries show inclusion
    By Moore sculpture drawn in
    Solids yield to light
    Space and scope within

Human circles shape our lives
    Family, friends and fellowship
    Spheres of influence interlocking
    Weave the fabric we design

Spirals linked in generations
Thought and action so recorded
Hope and wisdom ever sought
Life entwined in written word

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